THE CAPTAIN

A MAGAZINE
FOR BOYS & "OLD BOYS".

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FOR BOYS & "OLD BOYS."

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ONE HUNDRED YEARS AGO

Nearly a hundred years ago Britain was at war on the Continent, and France, now our ally, was our enemy. Napoleon is seen above at the farmhouse of La Belle Alliance, from which he directed the French operations against Wellington.

(Reproduced from the cinema film, "Waterloo," by permission of Ruffell's Exclusives, Ltd.)

At the prow Alfgar turned, took three daggers from the men, and, amid a breathless hush, began to walk back along the oars, juggling the daggers as he went.

FLAMEHAIR THE SKALD

A Thrilling Story of the Days when the Vikings Ruled the Seas

By H. BEDFORD JONES ⁂ Illustrated by T. Heath Robinson

CHAPTER I

THE RAVEN SHIP

IN the little bay to the east of the great harbour of the Island of Chios lay a small ship, the like of which had not often been seen in the Ægean Sea. She was long and low, very different from the high, heavy galleys of Byzantium. Instead of the sweeping lateen sails of Mohammedan or southern craft, the sail flapping idly at her mast was cut long and square, hanging from a single yard.

On either side extended long oars, moving very slowly, and glittering in the sun. The prow of the ship ended in a high black figure-head shaped like that of a bird, while the stern ended in a carved wooden bird's tail. As the long oars moved silently, the ship appeared not unlike some huge bird of prey flapping listlessly and slowly along the heavy swells.

The ship was filled with men—dark-haired fellows, most of them—who pulled at the oars or sat about cleaning ring shirts and weapons. Their shields hung beside the oars, on the outer bulwarks. But up on the high poop deck in the stern there were but two figures.

One of these stood at the helm. A tall, bronzed old sea-wolf he was, with black hair blowing about his face, and knotted hand easily controlling the heavy steering-oar, while the sun glittered on his woven ring shirt and golden arm rings. The other figure was that of a boy of some sixteen years.

Golden-haired and blue-eyed, there was no trace of weakness in his browned face. His nose was well shaped and curved like an eagle's beak, while the merry lips and strongly chiselled chin beneath betokened that this lad was of no common mould. As he sat beside the helmsman his long fingers swept across the strings of a harp, and the men below paused in their talk to listen eagerly.

Of a sudden the boy ceased and laid down the harp. As he did so there came a quick clash of steel from the deck below and a shout.

"More, Saxon! Sing us the stave of Beowulf! More!"

"Not now," returned the boy, shaking his head decidedly. "Wait till it is cooler!"

There was a low mutter and a growl, and the boy turned to the helmsman with a smile.

"Do Vikings never tire of songs, Atli?"

"Nay, Alfgar," rejoined the old Viking, "not from such golden throats as yours! Well indeed was it for you that you were born a skald, else had your bones been lying in the smoking rafters of the monks' roost back yonder."

"True enough," nodded Alfgar, a look of sadness overspreading his face. "Think you I will ever see England again?"

"Perchance, if Odin so wills," and the harsh voice softened. "Yet methinks you have much to be grateful to us for, young Christian. You have learned sword play and oar play, and you who were a weakling have become well-nigh a man in these few months. I have taught you more of sword skill and foot skill than even my comrades deem."

"Yes, old friend," returned Alfgar, his blue eyes gazing up into the stern black ones above, "you have indeed been a second father to me, and I thank you most warmly. Yet—yet——" The boy fell silent, gazing across the waters to the wooded hillsides of the fair island.

Alfgar's story was not an uncommon one in those days of strife. His parents dead, he had been educated by the good monks of Carth-friars, and had learned more than most boys

of that age knew. Then had come the terrible night when the Vikings of Raud the Red swept in from the sea and laid the monastery in ashes, sparing none of the monks and rifling the place of all it held.

By chance they had found that Alfgar was a skald (or singer), so Raud and his men carried off the Saxon lad in the *Raven*. About his neck, instead of the iron collar of a thrall, was riveted one of thin gold; yet it was the mark of slavery, and the freeborn English boy chafed under the yoke.

Out to sea they had gone, across the channel to France, down south, and farther south, halting here and there to burn and plunder. Then they had come to Gibraltar, or Norfasund, and after prolonged discussion Raud and his men had determined to sweep across the Mediterranean. Now, the *Raven's* hold loaded with plunder, the Vikings were eager to return to Denmark with their slaves and booty. One more ravage, one more scene of blood and fire, and the *Raven* would head for home.

Through it all Alfgar had passed as in a dream. Instead of being a thegn, a ward of his own King, a ruler in his own land, he was a slave, a thrall. Still, the Vikings had been kind enough to him, in their way; they had not forced him to adopt their religion, and Atli the Farsighted in particular had befriended him. He had learned the ways of war, although he had taken no part in the forays, and his skill in juggling and in the dangerous "oar walking" had made him a prime favourite among the men.

"Think you there are other Vikings in these seas?" asked the boy idly, after a time. The old warrior shook his head.

"Nay, lad. Men say that a ship from Norway swept through Norfasund a few years since, but that may be idle rumour. We have accomplished a great deed, Alfgar Flamehair, and men will talk long of us."

"Still," persisted the boy, "there is the Varangar Guard, the bodymen of the Emperor yonder," and he jerked his thumb north toward Byzantium. "Many from England and Denmark and Norway go thither—nay, my own mother's brother, Eadgar, joined it when he was outlawed from England by the son of Canute."

"The Varangars are not Vikings, lad, for they are Christian men all. I have heard men say that Harald, the brother of King Olaf Stout of Norway, fled to this part of the world after Olaf fell in battle. If that be true, we should hear of him. Harald was a kingly boy at the time, and must be a man by now."

A hoarse laugh sounded behind them, and Alfgar twisted about to see Raud the Red standing almost at their side. He had emerged from the cabin as they were speaking, and his flaming red beard and hair glowed almost crimson in the light of the falling sun.

"Aye, Atli Farseer," he chuckled in a deep voice, "that Harald you speak of was a kingly lad indeed. Well I mind me how we marched up against King Olaf——"

"We?" broke in Alfgar in surprise. "How was that?"

"I was in Thrandheim at the time," said Raud, his little red eyes sweeping the shores of the wooded island. "When the army of the rebels went out to meet Olaf I went along for the sport. And mighty sport we got! Olaf all but whipped us, until Thorer Hund got him down. The young Harald fought like a wolf, and well-nigh sent his spear through me. I hope we may meet him ere we return!"

As Alfgar gazed on the giant form that towered above him, noting the cruel face, the mighty hands, the long, golden-hilted sword that had taken so many lives, he felt a thrill of fear for the other when that meeting should come to pass. And he knew, too, that the Harald in question was hardly older than himself in years when he was first a leader of men.

At this moment their attention was distracted by a quarrel that arose among the men in the waist of the ship. Blows were exchanged, then there came the flash of steel, and a sharp clash. With a roar Raud the Red leaped from the quarterdeck into the midst of the throng, laying about with his huge fists, and as by magic the men scattered. Alfgar, watching, wondered if the time would ever come when brute strength would no longer be the greatest thing in the world. And there was good cause for the suppressed sigh that he uttered as he turned from the scene to gaze at the quiet island.

In the year of our Lord 1044 but small part of the world was civilised. England was half Saxon and half Dane; the Arabs were sweeping up through Spain into France; Denmark and Norway were still half savage, and were Christian but in name; while the bulwark of the Cross was the Greek Empire, still strong, and upheld by the Saxons, Danes, and other Westerners who poured into the Varangar ranks.

That the greatest of them all was even now biding his time to seize a throne, the boy in

the Viking ship knew not. He knew nothing of the wars waged in the Holy Land by Greek and Moslem, of the conquests that had been made by the Greek leader, and the stern training which the latter was going through. To him, the civilised world seemed fallen to pieces in the hands of barbarians; and many a wiser man thought the same in those dark times.

In the north, Olaf Tryggvison had fallen, and after him Olaf the Saint, fighting for the Cross. Ireland groaned under the hand of the Viking, and England was seething with discontent. The dominion of Charlemagne was scattered to the winds. Small wonder that Eadgar of Northumbria, outlawed by a cruel king fifteen years before, had never turned his face towards England again!

Thus thought the boy in the stern of the *Raven*, as the ship slowly beat her way past fishing villages and olive groves, which were not worth plundering, towards the head of the little bay. The sun was half-way to its setting, and was almost hidden by the trees on the hill above. Beyond lay a wooded promontory stretching ahead of them.

Suddenly Atli, worthy of his nickname, gave a shout and pointed towards this promontory ahead.

"Ho, Raud! What is that gleam among the trees?"

In an instant the bows were lined with men, as were the port bulwarks. The Vikings hastily donned their byrnies, or ring-mail shirts, for here danger might betide at any instant. Raud, springing up beside the helm, gazed long and earnestly under his hand.

"By the hammer of Thor!" he cried, suddenly. "It is the gilded prow of a ship on the other side of the headland! Arm, men!"

Alfgar saw a dull gleam among the trees, a twinkle of gold that blazed and then died suddenly. But the warning had been sufficient. Already the men were emptying chests of arrows, bringing up spears from the hold, and tearing down their shields; bows were strung, the Greek slaves forward were driven below, and Raud with his chosen berserkers posted themselves on the forecastle. Atli Farseer had charge of the stern.

"Quick, Flamehair," he cried sharply to Alfgar. "Into your byrnie, lad! Use my spare sword, the one I took from the Moslem chief!"

"Why?" exclaimed the Saxon boy, surprised. "What need of all this——"

"Need enough," broke in Atli. "Have we ever seen a ship with gilded figure-head since leaving our own land? Yonder is a sea-snake, or I——"

The Viking did not finish. Even as he spoke, something came round the headland that drew a subdued gasp from the men, while Alfgar stood and stared.

It was a ship, not unlike the *Raven*, save that it was larger in every way. That it had once been a dragon ship was evident, for the gilded tail still curled above the stern, the shields overlapped like scales, the oars formed the crawling feet of the beast; but instead of a dragon prow the sunlight blazed on a great gilded cross, and on the square-sail was another of blood-red. Alfgar heard a startled cry from Raud.

"Harald of Norway! Down, men, and quickly!"

Save for helmsman and one man in the bow, the approaching ship seemed deserted, although the oars moved slowly. But the man in the bow—what a man! thought the Saxon boy, with a deep breath of admiration. Taller than any of the Vikings, taller than Raud himself, with sweeping crimson cloak and golden helm bearing a dragon with outstretched wings, and with long golden hair that hung about his shoulders, this commander of the strange ship was one to awaken the interest of any beholder. Then Alfgar heard a sudden, tense whisper from Raud the Red, a whisper that thrilled back through the whole ship.

"Out bows, men! At his throat—before he suspects us!"

CHAPTER II

ALFGAR'S CHALLENGE

"WHO are ye who sail under the raven of Odin?"

The deep, hard, yet musical voice lifted across the waters to the Viking ship. As yet the crew of the *Raven* were crouched at the oars or beneath the bulwarks, but at a sudden motion of Raud's hand Alfgar saw the arrows fitted to the bows. Not until then had he comprehended the plan of the sea-wolf, and with a little gasp of horror he realised that in another moment the splendid figure . . .

"Down, Harald, down!"

Hardly conscious that he had screamed forth the words, Alfgar leaped to the stern as the Vikings rose. The tall figure disappeared, and a storm of arrows sang where he had stood a moment before. Then Alfgar felt the heavy hand of Atli dash him aside and a spear sank

quivering in the deck. Raud, in the bow, was poising a second spear as Alfgar came to himself.

Without an instant's hesitation the Saxon boy flung off his cloak and leaped overboard. He dived deeply, but as he came to the surface something tore through his hair and he went down again. When he emerged for the second time Raud the Red had something else with which to busy himself.

The shore was not far and Alfgar soon gained the shelving beach. Wading up to the water's edge, he seated himself on a rock to watch the combat, with bated breath. For, like some monster wakened from a sleep, the strange ship had sprung into sudden life. Her decks were covered with steel-clad men, and with every long oar spurning the water she swept down on the *Raven*.

Raud's men lashed their oars, but before they could gain headway the prow of the other ship crashed into them and the air was filled with arrows. Alfgar saw the tall figure in the golden helm leap from his post down into the Viking ship, and as if by magic the defence seemed to melt away. But when it came to taking the stern and the forecastle, where Raud and Atli were, it was a very different matter.

Harald led his men to the attack, but time after time they were beaten back. Then Alfgar saw the tall young leader leap back to his own ship, shout an order, and for an instant he thought the attack was to be abandoned, as the ship drew away. But only for an instant; even as an exultant yell went up from the Vikings, the Cross ship leaped forward again, and this time her forecastle lay alongside that of the Viking, and the grappling-irons bound the two ships closely.

Over the bulwarks went Harald, and Raud the Red met him, sword in hand. A moment the sunlight sparkled on clashing steel, then of a sudden the Viking leader disappeared. A peal of war-horns, and Harald's men poured into the *Raven*.

With the fall of Raud the combat was over. The Viking crew either yielded or fought on stubbornly in berserk rage to the end. Alfgar saw three or four hold the prow until they were cut down, then the fight swept to the stern. Here Atli Farseer defended himself for a brief space, but it was hopeless. Some of his men leaped overboard, others surrendered, and Alfgar saw the old helmsman yield at last to Harald himself. Then, slipping again into the water, the Saxon boy swam out to the ships.

He was greeted by a shout from the men and a peal of horns, while Harald himself pulled him over the side, the men crowding around. Then for the first time Alfgar found himself facing one of the greatest men of his own times.

Taller than the Saxon by head and shoulders, and broad in proportion, the Norseman was truly gigantic. His golden helm had been cloven, and his long yellow hair, fairer than that of Alfgar, dripped blood. But Alfgar barely noted this, for his eyes were fastened on the proud, handsome face of the young leader. High of brow, long of chin, with a great curved nose—these details were lost in the light from the blue eyes, which almost seemed to send forth sparks, so hard and cold and level were they. Then Alfgar found himself clasping a hand of iron.

"Thanks, friend!" said Harald, smiling. "That was a well-aimed word of yours, and mayhap it saved my life. Who are you?"

In a few words Alfgar told his story. As he finished, Harald drew his knife and quickly cut the soft gold collar about the boy's neck.

"There!" he laughed, "no longer a thrall, but one of Harald's men! Wilt take service with the Emperor, Englishman?"

"Not I," returned Alfgar. A cry of surprise and a mutter of rage rose from the men crowding around. A flash of terrible anger leaped into Harald's face.

"What!" he exclaimed. "Do you presume——"

"Wait," smiled Alfgar, catching the two hands of the young leader and falling to his knees. Placing his hands between those of Harald, he went on, "I take no service with the Emperor, Harald, but with you."

"Skoal! Skoal!" A tremendous shout of approval rang, while the delighted warriors clashed their weapons together. Harald looked down into the boy's face, smiling, and gently loosed his hands.

"So be it, Alfgar of England. Stay—what name do men give thee?"

"Flamehair, Harald," came the voice of old Atli from behind. "And a right worthy skald is he."

"Then you shall be my skald," laughed Harald, shaking back his hair "Art skilled with weapons?"

At this question Atli laughed, but Alfgar hesitated to answer. He knew well that he could have held his own with any of those on the ship, but he hesitated to declare his skill, as yet untried in battle. His silence was

misinterpreted by the men around, and one of them clapped his hand down on Alfgar's shoulder with an oath.

"We'll teach the Saxon wolfing how to fight!" he laughed harshly, and the tone was more offensive than the words. "He'll forget his daintiness soon enough——"

Flushing with anger, Alfgar whirled about and struck at the man. But the warrior caught his hand and brushed it aside, to go staggering back the next instant beneath a blow from Harald.

"Peace, wolves!" roared the leader, and the men shrank from him. "If the Saxon be a weakling, remember that he is my man!"

"We want no weaklings in Tsargrad," went up a mutter. Alfgar, at once ashamed of his loss of temper, sprang before Harald and faced them.

"I am no weakling, Varangars!" he cried, proudly, his hand on his sword. "Let your best man stand up to me, and you shall take back that word!"

A shout went up from the men.

"Accept it, Harald! He has challenged! He has challenged! You are our champion—accept it!"

Alfgar heard a faint groan from Atli, who now stood at his back. Then Harald, half smiling, turned to him.

"I take no service with the Emperor, Harald, but with you."

"You are over-bold, Flamehair! Take back the challenge, for you knew not what you said. Harald of Norway cannot fight with him who saved his life."

Alfgar gazed up at the handsome face of the young giant, but he was desperate. Unless he removed the stigma, he knew well it would cling to him through his life. "Alfgar the Weakling!" The thought stung him like a blow.

"What I have said, I have said," he answered, calmly, although his face was pale. For an instant Harald met his gaze, then turned to his men.

"So be it. Men, clear the ships and put out the oars. Let those of the Vikings who will accept the White Christ enter my service. When we have left the bay behind we will take up this challenge."

"An oar walk!" howled the men as they broke up, and Alfgar clasped hands with Atli Farseer as he turned. Following Harald at his command, the two went aboard the *Crossbeak*, as the ship was named. Behind them, the *Raven* was quickly stripped of its dead, the shattered oars were replaced by sound ones, and with the wounded of both crews lying on the deck of the captured vessel, the two ships slowly left the island.

"May Odin speed you, Flamehair," muttered old Atli, standing beside Alfgar in the stern. "Evidently this Harald is some great champion, for the men are eager. But you have more skill in the oar walk than any I have yet seen, and it may well be that you will come out unscathed."

"I trust so, old friend," rejoined Alfgar quietly, loosening his belt and taking off his shoes. "There is little breeze, and it will not be so hard as on the *Raven*, I think."

Now, although the Saxon knew it not, Harald was at that time famous for his skill in all exercises. No man could stand before him in combat, and at the "oar walk" his rivals were few. This sport was dangerous in the extreme, and only those of great skill dare attempt it.

It consisted in walking along the blades of the oars while these were being rowed by the men, and was the greatest feat of a Viking. A single slip or a miss-step meant certain death, for if the walker fell he would surely be struck by the other oars and ground down. Atli had taught the art to Alfgar, and the quickfooted Saxon had proven an adept at it on the long voyage down from England.

The sun was just setting as the two ships gained the open sea. Barely a dozen of the Vikings remained alive. As their religion meant little to them, they accepted service willingly enough with the famous chief of the Varangars who had conquered Raud, and were already looking forward to gaining huge booty under his command.

Alfgar stood ready as Harald appeared. The latter had removed his arms and was clad only in a skirted crimson garment, belted at the waist. Atli nudged the Saxon.

"By Thor! He disdains to remove his leggings! This must be a little thing to him, Flamehair! Now remember—wait for the back-swing, and keep well above the waterline on the oars!"

Alfgar nodded as Harald approached and clapped him on the shoulder.

"Ready, Saxon? Bethink ere it is too late."

"All ready," laughed Alfgar. Then he glanced at the hair of the Norseman. "But your head, Harald? Will it not disadvantage you?"

"Only a scratch," said the other carelessly. "All right, men! Fall into slow stroke, and bear steady!"

"Trust us, Harald," came the answer from the rowers, while the men crowded the bulwarks and the *Raven* drew close to see the fun. Harald stepped to one side of the stern and Alfgar to the other, they poised a moment on the bulwark, then each stepped on the last oar as it swung.

Steadily and carelessly Harald walked, but Alfgar kept even place with him, amid a surprised murmur from the men and a shout from the other ship. At the prow Harald met him with a word of approval, then took from one of the men two daggers. This time, as he walked back along the oars, he juggled the knives without missing!

Alfgar watched with the rest. As the men turned to him with a roar of delight, he took, not two knives but three, and amid a breathless hush performed the feat. As he finished he was met with a storm of yells, while from the *Raven* came shouts and the sound of horns.

But Harald, with a quiet smile, took his two knives and a long sword, and juggling these as he went, returned to the bow. The Vikings went wild over this feat; and, when the applause quieted, Alfgar seized a sword and two knives, pale but determined. Before he could step from the bulwark Atli gripped his shoulder.

"Harald! Stop the lad! Surely he has done enough, and a sword he has never tried. It would be murder!"

Alfgar twisted away, but Harald had run back along the rowers' benches, and seized his hand.

"Flamehair," he smiled, gazing deep into the Saxon's grey eyes, "you have far surpassed all my own men in skill, so fear not that any will name you weakling after this!"

A hoarse murmur of assent arose from the men. "Not my man, but my friend, Flamehair! And it may be that I shall need that quick eye of yours if——"

As Harald paused, a roar went up from the men, a roar of delighted joy.

"Skoal!" they bellowed, pressing around. "Skoal to Harald of Norway!"

And the prows were headed for Tsargrad, for so the Vikings called Byzantium, the city of the Emperor.

CHAPTER III

TRAPPED!

THE three days' trip to the Golden Horn was uneventful. In that short time Harald and Alfgar became firm friends The former, who was the "Acolyth" or commander of the Varangars, had with a handful of men conquered Sicily and Palestine for the Empress, Zoe the Great; but instead of finding him a bloodthirsty Viking like Raud, Alfgar found him a lonely man, stern but kindly. A fugitive at the age of ten, his rightful throne of Norway in other hands, it was small wonder that the young leader was nicknamed "Hard-rede," or "stern counsel."

Of his family, none had remained with him. This in itself formed a bond between him and the young Saxon; and when Alfgar told of his uncle Eadgar, exiled years before, he found that Eadgar was in command of the palace "squad" or bodyguard, and was in high repute.

The more Alfgar saw of his new leader, the more he admired him. The men loved Harald absolutely, and obeyed him with implicit confidence; while Harald lived as one of them and shared their privations fully. On the third evening Atli, Alfgar, and Egil Thordson, Harald's forecastle man, were standing in the prow watching the shores on either hand and the passing galleys.

"Harald cannot stay quiet," chuckled Egil. "No sooner were we back from Jerusalem than he would take a cruise with us Northmen. We sacked many Mohammedan places and took many ships, but the *Raven* was the goodliest of them all in booty."

"Well might she be," returned Atli. "But these Varangars—are they all Northmen like ourselves?"

"Nay," rejoined Egil scornfully. "There be Saxons, Franks, Russland men, and others, but Harald loves best us who speak his own tongue, and next the Saxons. Your uncle, Flamehair, is a right worthy warrior."

"I have heard talk among the men," said Atli slowly "of Harald and the Empress. What of it, Egil?"

"This," and Egil lowered his voice. "The Empress, Zoe, would fain marry our Harald—"

"What!" broke from the others.

"Aye, and make him Emperor," went on Egil, earnestly. "But this, Harald will not do. It is in his mind to return to Norway some day, and he has great store of treasure in his ships. Besides, we came down through Russland, you know, and Elizabeth, daughter of the Russian King Jarisleif—well, Harald will not forget her easily!"

"Skoal to King Harald!" cried Alfgar excitedly. A light step sounded behind them, and, turning, the confused Saxon saw the young leader himself.

"Not so loud, my friends," smiled Harald. His face sobered quickly. "Listen, Egil and Atli. When we are home again do you bid our Northmen choose between me and Tsargrad, but keep silence to the rest. If they will, we may yet return north some day."

Suddenly Atli turned from the speaker and put up his hand to shield his eyes from the setting sun. Gazing in surprise, the others could see a glint of gold in the north, and rapidly approaching, while over the gold was a splash of red.

"What ship is this," cried Atli, "decked with gold and bearing a crimson sail?"

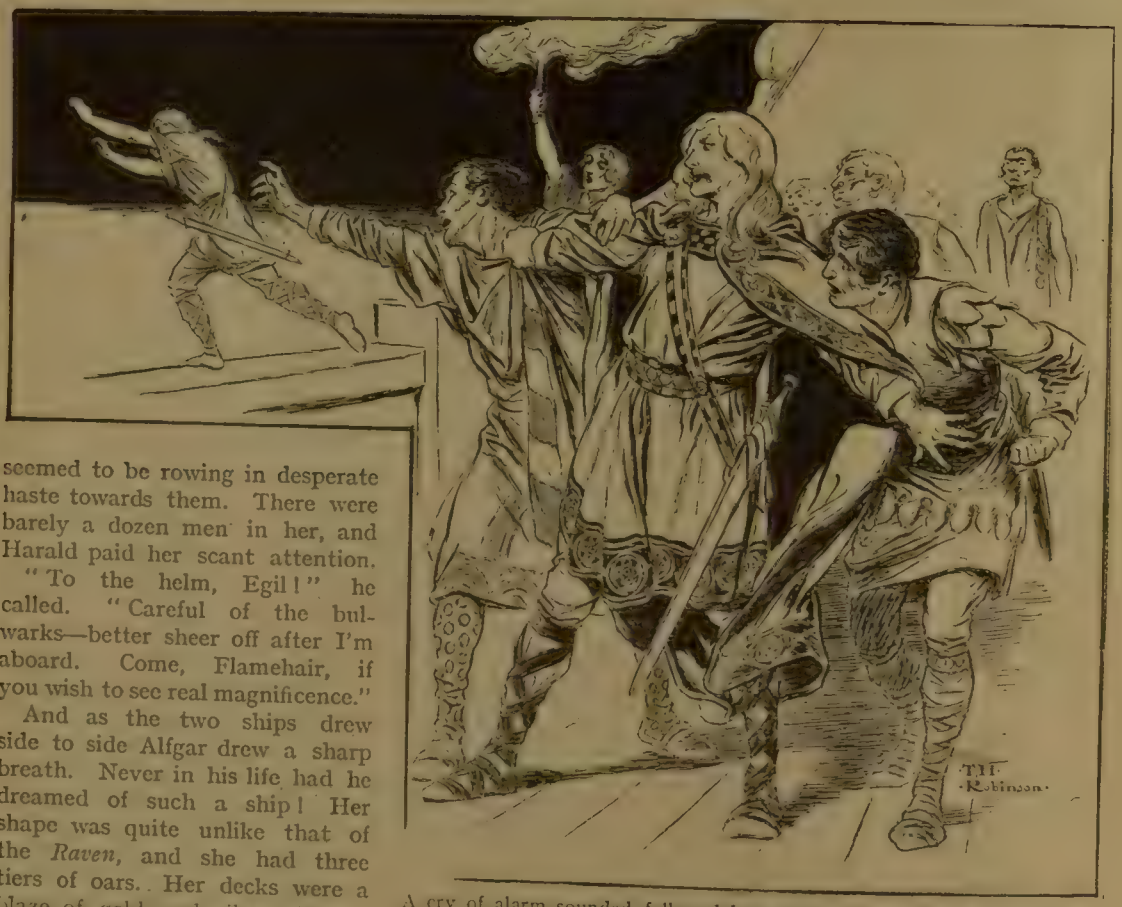
"Well-named, Farseer!" exclaimed Harald, approvingly. "Surely the sail is crimson, therefore it is a state galley, bearing tidings from the Empress!" He turned to the crew. "Ready to salute, men!"

The Northmen, who had small love for the Greeks they served, went to their quarters with fierce scowls, while Alfgar eagerly watched the approaching galley. The *Crossbeak* was now not far from the city. To their left lay the Golden Horn and the outstretched walls and buildings, still dim in the distance A mile behind was the *Raven*, bearing full half of Harald's men, for the *Crossbeak* was easier to row than the ship of Raud, and they were proceeding against the wind.

When the galley was only a bowshot distant her sail came down, and it was evident that she wished to speak them. At the same instant Atli pointed off to the left.

"See, Harald! Right under that building you called the Acropolis!"

Turning, they all saw a small boat which



A cry of alarm sounded, followed by a rush of feet. The young Saxon caught a glimpse of Harald holding a crowd of men at bay, and then leapt into the sea.

seemed to be rowing in desperate haste towards them. There were barely a dozen men in her, and Harald paid her scant attention.

"To the helm, Egil!" he called. "Careful of the bulwarks—better sheer off after I'm aboard. Come, Flamehair, if you wish to see real magnificence."

And as the two ships drew side to side Alfgar drew a sharp breath. Never in his life had he dreamed of such a ship! Her shape was quite unlike that of the *Raven*, and she had three tiers of oars. Her decks were a blaze of gold and silver decoration, and her poop deck and cabins seemed to be gilded solidly. Her upper deck hid the rowers from sight, and only a small group of splendidly clad persons stood waiting to receive the acolyth.

Slowly the ships drew alongside, Egil at the tiller of the *Crossbeak*. The port oars of the galley suddenly flashed in, the starboard oars of the viking ship dropped back, and with barely a bump the two were together. Harald instantly leaped over the bulwarks, and Alfgar followed. The next instant the oars were out again and the ships were separated.

The officers, for such they seemed to be, bowed low to Harald and spoke to him in Greek. He assented, and turned to his follower.

"Come, Flamehair, into the cabin. There is a letter from the Empress for me."

Nothing loth, Alfgar followed to the cabin door. Before Harald stooped to enter, their attention was caught by the small boat, the rowers of which were standing up and shouting.

"I wonder what that boat can want?" said Harald.

"No doubt a fisherman who wants to drive a bargain," laughed one of the Greeks in the Northman's tongue. Harald smiled, and entered the cabin. Alfgar saw that it was dimly lit and filled with rich hangings, then one of the officers motioned him to a couch. Harald stood beneath a hanging lamp, for it was almost dusk, and impatiently tore open a packet reverently handed him.

Alfgar gazed about with great wonder and interest. The hanging lamp was of rich silver; silks and tapestries, which he had seldom before seen, were all about him, and it was with a start that he came to himself at a quick exclamation from Harald.

"By the gods of Asgard! This is too much!"

Sitting up, Alfgar suddenly realised that there was now only one man with them, he who spoke their language. He caught sight of

Harald's face and sprang to his feet, for never had he seen such anger in a man as that expressed by his leader.

"What does this mean, Michael?" went on Harald, furiously. "I am to obey you in all things, says the Empress. Explain!"

The officer bowed, extending his hands in deprecation.

"The orders of the Empress, lord! Is an officer of the palace to know her mind?"

"What are your orders, fool?" roared Harald.

"To conduct you to the summer palace at Blanchernae, lord. There the Empress will see you, if it is her will."

Harald put forth one hand, gripped Michael by the shoulder, and threw him into the corner with a crash. At the same instant came a faint noise from without—the sound of Norse warhorns.

"Your sword, Flamehair!" shouted Harald, springing to the door. It was fastened, but flinging himself back the giant burst it open with a single blow of his fist, and stumbled out. After him came Alfgar, sword in hand

They paused, astonished at the sight before them. Instead of an empty deck, the galley was crowded with men, and more were appearing from below. They were out of bowshot of the *Crossbeak*, and the *Raven* was farther still from them. Harald dropped his weapon with a groan.

"Trapped, Flamehair! No use fighting, lad. What a blind fool I was! We can do naught save obey and trust to our luck. Come back."

He drew Alfgar back within the cabin before the crew of the galley had observed them. So rapidly had all transpired that Michael was just getting to his feet as they re-entered, and Harald helped him up with a careless laugh.

"Come, Michael, you had planned better than I thought. I will obey the commands of the Empress to the letter. My men are somewhat excited, it seems; shall I not send this lad back with a message of peace?"

The cunning Greek smiled. He clearly saw through the stratagem of the Norseman, and shook his head.

"Nay, lord, but you might write a word reassuring them."

Harald assented, and Michael procured parchment and a quill. Harald signed what he wrote without reading, and, with a low bow, the Greek departed to send off a small boat to the *Crossbeak*.

"Why do things look so badly?" asked the puzzled Alfgar. "Surely a visit to the Empress is not a hard thing to perform?"

"You do not know the Empress," laughed Harald, harshly. "The summer palace is in reality a private prison for those of high birth. There, I suppose, she would keep me until I promise to marry her."

"Is there no Emperor, then?" persisted the Saxon.

"He is a puppet in her hands," returned Harald. "She would put him aside or mayhap kill him. What a woman she is! But she has trapped me fairly enough, and it seems to me that some day there will be a reckoning for this deed."

"Could but the Varangars learn you were a prisoner and where," mused Alfgar, "they might be able to do something."

"Aye, but how can they learn?" retorted Harald, bitterly. "Everything was provided against, it seems! No, we are helpless. Perchance I may use craft with the Empress, but I doubt it."

"Come, it is not your way to be downcast," Alfgar laughed cheeringly. "Could I but get away to-night——"

Harald sprang to his feet.

"The very thing—but impossible. No, you are a stranger here, you do not know the language, you would be recaptured certainly." He placed his hand on the boy's shoulder, and his voice softened. "Thanks, Flamehair, but it could not be done."

"And yet it is the only chance," urged the boy earnestly. "I am more than willing to run the risk, Harald. Methinks it would be slight. I could drop overboard and swim to the shore easily. In the morning I could find the Varangars——"

Harald began pacing up and down the cabin, playing with his swordhilt and thinking deeply. Finally he paused before Alfgar.

"Flamehair, you shall try it. There is one chance in a hundred that you will have the luck to make it. If you do, seek out the quarters of the Varangars, get hold of Egil, your uncle, Ulf Uspakeson, or his friend Haldor. These last are Iceland men, and trusty. Take this arm-ring and it will pass you anywhere among my men."

He took a light gold ring from his arm and slipped it over that of Alfgar. The latter saw that it was graven with runes, and nodded. There was a strange excitement in the lad's heart, for he knew that should he succeed in this attempt he would be accounted a full man

by the Northmen, and the very danger thrilled him. He gave little heed to the fact that he was in a strange land, among strange peoples; that his very hair would betray him should search be made. It was North against South here, he thought exultantly, and the difference of race was forgotten instantly.

"Now, how will you get overboard?" said Harald, knitting his brows. "It is in my mind that we are well watched here."

"Let us walk on the deck," laughed Alfgar, shaking his golden-red hair back from his face and unloosing his mail coat. "I will make ready should the chance come."

At the door they found Michael posted, and he saluted Harald deeply. There was no reason why his lord should not go out on deck, he said with a smile, and the three were in the open air.

The sun had long since fallen. To right and left, before and behind them, glittered the lights of Byzantium, while the trireme ploughed onward towards the northern end of the city, where lay the palace of Blanchernae. The galley was speeding swiftly under her oars, and the two captives took up their post in the stern beside the helmsman, a Greek.

"This fellow does not know our tongue," said Harald. "Think you that you can swim to shore?"

"Easily," smiled Alfgar, loosening his tunic. "I am not a fast swimmer, though."

"That matters little," replied Harald. "Once away, and they will lose you in the darkness. Now watch! Do you see that blaze of light to the left? That marks the Great Palace, and the quarters of the Varangars are there. If you are ready, this would be a good time to go."

The words meant little, but as Alfgar gripped Harald's hand he felt how much the young leader appreciated his efforts, by a hand-clasp that told more than words. One quick glance at the helmsman, and Alfgar sprang to the rail. A shout from the watchful Michael, a rush of feet, and with a quick vision of Harald holding a crowd of men at bay, the young Saxon drove out and into the blackness of the Golden Horn.

CHAPTER IV

THE WINDOW IN THE WALL

ALFGAR swam under water as long as he could, then came up for breath. From behind came the sound of shouts and a flare of torchlight, but he was beyond its circle and struck out for the shore. He had not counted on the tide, however, which swept him along strongly, and when he felt the ground beneath his feet he was far out of his course for the palace.

In front was a black mass, which resolved itself into fishing-boats and small docks. There seemed to be no one about, however, and with a sigh of relieved weariness Alfgar drew himself up on a wooden pier and lay there resting for some moments.

The young Saxon knew little of cities beyond what he had seen on the voyage from England, but as soon as he gained the narrow street he knew that he was in the poorer quarter of the capital. The houses were small and close, and the streets were vile. In every doorway clustered groups of folk who stared strangely upon him, so that Alfgar drew his sword and cast many a look over his shoulder.

He was not molested, much to his relief. After ten minutes he came to streets which were dimly lit by cressets, and ahead of him came a confused babel of voices together with a wider flare of light. Making his way towards this, he found himself in a street of shops, which were doing a thriving trade.

Around him were men of all countries—merchants from Persia and Genoa, Jews from Syria and Germany, Moorish traders from Sicily or Spain—whose gay attire imparted a festal air to the scene. But the anxious boy had small thought for this. Where was the Palace?

Twice he stopped men with the question, but received only a shake of the head and a brusque reply in Greek. Finally he stopped before the shop of an armourer where a crowd of men were gathered, trusting to find among them one of the Varangars.

"Which way to the Great Palace?" he cried, plucking the sleeve of one. Instantly the man turned on him with a shout of rage and with drawn dagger. Instinctively Alfgar leaped back. As he did so the crowd came at him with a yell, and the frightened lad took to his heels.

Bewildered, Alfgar took shame to himself as he ran, but it was too late. Something in the yells behind sent a thrill of fear through him, though he did not know their import, and he fled the faster. As he ran, he drew his sword and the sight of the fleeing Saxon brought more pursuers in his train.

Doubling corners, twisting here and there aimlessly, Alfgar could not shake off the howling mob behind him. Suddenly he turned

into a wider street, and heard a clatter of hoofs. Before him was a chariot drawn by four white horses, and knowing that this must be a great man, the Saxon sped to the side of the car.

"Help!" he gasped to the sole occupant, a bearded, eagle-eyed man who stared at him in surprise. But the other shook his head as the first of the mob appeared. The horses plunged, and the chariot was off. As Alfgar turned desperately he felt a hand on his arm and a commanding voice in his ear.

"Hold!"

The tongue was that of the monks, which he had learned at the monastery, and Alfgar clasped a thin, hair-clothed figure which stood beside him with uplifted hand.

"Save me!" he cried in Latin. "I have done nothing!"

A stone crashed against the wall beside him as the mob poured into the street, then the figure of the monk advanced. Abashed, the crowd pushed back with a confused cry. The monk turned to Alfgar.

"Are you a thief, as they say?"

"Nay," panted the Saxon, "but I plucked the sleeve of one to ask my way, being a stranger, and they came upon me."

With a commanding gesture the monk whirled upon the mob, and under the evident sting of his words they slunk away. Not until the street was clear did the monk turn to the lad by the wall.

"And now, my son——"

Alfgar poured out his story, corroborated by his dripping garments. As he finished, the monk shook his head sadly.

"I dare not mingle in the intrigues of the court," he said, slowly. "As for saving you from these men, that was but my duty, lad; but I cannot be seen guiding you, for I myself am in danger."

"You! In danger?" echoed Alfgar, amazed.

"You know not this city," answered the monk, his face darkening. "I tell you, destruction shall come upon it! Christians are persecuted, while heretics—but enough. Your way lies yonder, along this street. Follow it and you will come to the Palace. Farewell."

And the monk was gone in the darkness. As one in a dream, Alfgar turned and walked along, wondering. The street was all but deserted, for he was out of the bazaar quarter. The few who passed gave him but a glance, there being many strangers in Byzantium, and Alfgar believed that his troubles were past.

He realised that those around the armourer's booth had thought him a cutpurse, and his cheeks burned at the thought. As he remembered the man in the chariot, and his refusal of aid, they burned again, but with anger this time.

As Alfgar turned the corner a stone struck him, but he held on, though now all chance of escape seemed gone.

"If I ever meet him again," thought the Saxon, "I'll make him remember that churlish deed!"

His way took him past many houses, and soon he came to a high wall, which continued without a break, save for a window here and there. As he passed one of these he heard the sound of sobbing, and paused involuntarily. Listening, the sound came again, and Alfgar spoke on the impulse of the moment.

"Who is there? What is the matter?"

Instantly he regretted the speech, remembering that his tongue was unknown here, and realising the foolishness of the act. But his regret turned to amazement at hearing an answer softly spoken, but in good honest Saxon:—

"Who are you speaking?"

"Hurrah!" exclaimed Alfgar, his heart leaping. "Are you English?"

"Aye, and a captive! Can you help me?"

"You are a woman!" whispered the Saxon in astonishment. "What is this place? Where are you? I but arrived here to-night."

"My name is Sigrid," came the low answer. "I am no Saxon, but from England. My father is Hrolf, one of the Varangars, and two days since I was taken for a hostage by the Empress, for the loyalty of the Varangars is in doubt."

Alfgar gave a whistle of surprise. Evidently the Empress had neglected nothing. The trap for Harald had been well planned, and doubtless there were others of the families of the Varangars who were in the same plight as Sigrid.

"Listen!" said the Saxon, thinking quickly. "Harald is a prisoner, and I bear the tidings. I must hasten on now, but if aught can be done I will do it."

"Tell my father I am in the quarters of the Princess Maria," came back the reply, "with the rest. There is no——"

Something seized Alfgar around the waist and bore him away from the window. He found himself in the grasp of two men, who must have stolen on him as he listened at the window. Despite his struggles they carried him silently along until they came to a cresset in the wall. A moment later his hands were bound and they were inspecting him curiously. Both were Greeks, and he could not understand their questions.

His heart bursting with rage and shame at being thus caught, Alfgar waited. Finally one questioned him in bad Latin:—

"What are you doing here?"

"I am seeking the Palace," he replied calmly enough.

"The palace! You!" The two burst into ribald laughter, and one struck him brutally across the mouth. Staggering back, Alfgar tore at his bonds, but in vain.

"Take him to the guardhouse," laughed one of the men. "We'll make some sport out of the dog to-night!"

"So you Franks think you own the empire, eh?" hissed the other in Alfgar's face. "You lord it over the city—Varangars, forsooth! Aye, you shall dance a merry dance to-night, dog!"

Too late Alfgar remembered the tales he had heard aboard the *Crossbeak* of the strife between the Greek soldiers and the Northmen, of the one or two men who were missing every little while, and his heart sank. Each of the men taking an arm, they hurried him down the street, but he resolved that whatever befell he would break away at the first chance.

But no opportunity seemed to offer, as they turned corner after corner, until with a muttered oath the man on his left slipped in a pool of muddy water. The other paused with a laugh, and as he did so Alfgar threw himself against him and sent the man staggering. The next instant he was running down the street.

There was a yell of rage behind him, and the chase was on. The desperate young Saxon knew that he was lost if he fell, and his bound arms held him back, but he kept well in the lead of the two. He had long since lost all sense of direction, and had but a blind hope of throwing off his pursuers.

Slowly but surely they gained on him, running silently after that first yell, and their silence made Alfgar fear them the more. He was among taverns and wine shops now, and twice drunken revellers tried to stop him. But he burst through their flower-strewn ranks each time, gasping for breath. Then a crowd of soldiers poured out of a tavern ahead, and as he broke through they took up the chase with a howl of delight. The hunted boy groaned, for now there was small chance of escape.

Down side streets and around corners he darted, and presently a stone sang in his ears, then more. His breath was coming in sobs now, great sobs that seemed to tear his breast asunder, but in spite of all he held on. He knew that he was staggering as he ran, and a stone that bruised his arm all but sent him headlong. As he turned a corner another stone struck him.

"By the hammer of Thor!"

Dimly Alfgar heard the words from a low doorway. Over it were scrawled letters, and he knew it for a tavern. The words were Danish! Whirling with a last effort, Alfgar darted in the doorway as the first of the howling mob behind dashed around the corner.

He found himself in a low, wide room littered with tables. A quick shout rose at his entrance, and a huge red-bearded man caught the Saxon as he fell.

"Help!" he gasped, hoarsely. "Harald—a captive——"

He fell forward, done up completely, but still conscious. He heard one wild shrill roar of rage as the crowd burst in, then a deeper roar and a rattle of steel.

"At them, Varangars! Beat the dogs down!"

This time a yell of stricken fear shrilled high in the room, as the Greeks, pressed forward by the mob outside, felt the Varangar steel. Shriek upon shriek went up, swords clashed on armour, and as Alfgar raised his head faintly he saw a dozen fair-haired giants cutting their way through the Greek mercenaries.

"Thor!" "The White Christ!" "Odin with us!" A strange mixture of battle-cries, pagan and Christian, went up from the Northmen, and with a feeble smile Alfgar the Saxon dropped his head to the rushes that strewed the floor, unconscious.

"Gently, Ragnvald! Pour the ale into him, Olaf! There!"

Alfgar opened his eyes, and pushed away the horn of ale as he sat up in the arms of the red-bearded Varangar. His breath still came in sobs, and his heart was pounding. Scattered around on the floor were men who groaned or lay quiet, while the Northmen still held their unsheathed swords.

"Can you walk, lad?" questioned his holder. "We must be gone before the guard is down upon us!"

"Aye, with a little help," and Alfgar struggled up. Once on his feet, his strength seemed to return all at once, and he gripped the hand of the Varangar gratefully.

"No time for that," muttered the man. "Hasten, you sea wolves! Come, lad."

They were in the open air now, and the crowd had vanished. Two of the men aided Alfgar to walk, although he needed their help but little, and after five minutes one of them pointed to a wall ahead.

"Here we are, wolf cub! Not the Emperor himself dare molest us at home! In with you, now."

CHAPTER V

"TO THE PALACE!"

A MOMENT later Alfgar was seated on a pile of skins, while round him crowded a mass of men—Norsemen, Danes, Saxons, and Franks. The building was of stone, the room with low ceiling but immense in size, and it plainly served as sleeping quarters for the men.

"Out with the tale, Fairhair," commanded the red-bearded man, not unkindly. "How came those Greek dogs after you?"

"Who are you?" retorted Alfgar, with a smile. "Have the *Crossbeak* men landed yet?"

"The *Crossbeak?*" went up a shout. "What? Is Harald home again?"

A thrill of dismay went through Alfgar. He did not know that incoming ships, even that of Harald, could not enter the harbour at night because of the great chain stretched across it. He stared at the men in perplexity.

"Is Haldor or Ulf of Iceland here? Or Eadgar of England?"

"Here am I," answered a voice, as a man pushed forward. Although he had not seen his uncle for years, Alfgar knew him at once and sprang up.

"Uncle!" he cried. "I am Alfgar!"

"What!" The other, whose brown beard was streaked with grey, looked into the Saxon's face, then threw both arms around him. "It is truth! He is my sister's son, comrades!"

Alfgar loosed himself from that bear's hug with a wry smile.

"Careful, uncle! Two well-aimed stones made me somewhat sore. Pardon, friends, I forgot to thank you for my rescue!"

"Never mind that," came a shout. "Give us the tale! Where is Harald?"

Alfgar hesitated. He realised now that if he delivered his message to these wild spirits, they would be capable of anything. An attack on the Palace would mean Harald's death, and he turned to his uncle.

"Know you this?" He pulled up his sleeve and showed Harald's arm ring. With a murmur of amazement the men pushed closer. "Uncle, I have a message for you and Ulf and Haldor in private."

"I am Ulf Uspakeson," said the red-bearded Viking. "Haldor is on duty. Come with us, lad."

While the wondering men made way, Alfgar followed the two chiefs across the room into another and smaller one. Eadgar stuck a torch into a holder on the wall and turned.

"Harald is a captive," said Alfgar. Speechless, the two men gazed at him. Then, giving them no time to talk, he plunged into his story and did not finish until the whole of it was related to them. Ulf fingered his great sword as he listened, and Eadgar's face darkened, but neither interrupted until the end.

"That is sorry news, Alfgar," said his uncle, slowly. "You did well not to blurt it out before the men."

"Aye, the lad is keen of wit enough," spoke Ulf, thickly. Then he whipped out his blade with a roar. "By the One-eyed! For a drachma I'd lead them against the Palace itself! The treacherous dogs!"

"Quiet, old friend," and Eadgar laid a restraining hand on his arm. "Hold! What is that noise?"

All three paused, listening.

Outside came a low roar, then it grew suddenly and seemed to fill the building. There came the rushing of feet, the clashing of weapons, then a furious pounding at the door.

"Ulf! Eadgar! Open! Hardrede is taken! Open quickly!"

Eadgar sprang to the door, the others following. An instant later they were in the big room, which was filled with a raging mass of men. Alfgar recognised among them many from the *Crossbeak*, and Egil Thordson burst through.

"To arms, Ulf! Harald is a captive! We landed outside the walls and fought our way through. To the Palace!"

"To the Palace!" echoed the shout, but Ulf and Eadgar sprang to the great doorway, motioning the men back.

"Hold, comrades," began the Saxon, but a shout interrupted him.

"To the prisons! A rescue!"

At length the chiefs calmed the tumult a trifle and made their voices heard above the din.

"What use to storm the prisons?" cried Eadgar. "Harald is not there."

At this a wondering silence fell, for as yet the Vikings did not know where Harald was. Michael's note had not deceived them, however. Then Eadgar turned to Alfgar and bid him tell his tale. At its conclusion the men looked blankly at one another.

"He had best marry the Empress and have done," muttered a Frank, but a Dane turned on the man with a frown. As the chiefs heard reports from Egil, Alfgar greeted old Atli Farseer warmly. Meanwhile, questions about the young Saxon began to fly around, and the *Crossbeak* men noised abroad who the lad was, and his skill.

"Come!" suddenly cried a swarthy Norseman named Svein, drawing his sword. "To the Palace, comrades! If we wait we shall all be butchered here. To arms, and to the rescue!"

(*To be continued.*)

IN THE SCRUM—AND OUT.

BY E. H. D. SEWELL.

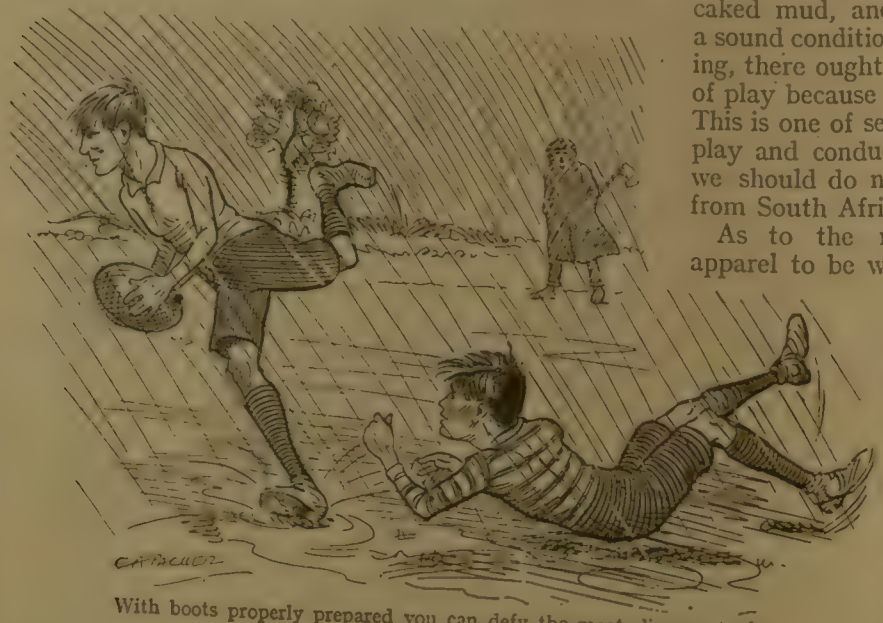
I AM writing these articles for THE CAPTAIN in the hope that by reading them many fellows will be able to improve their game. What I have to say is advanced mainly to those who have not yet won their spurs at footer—to those, in fact, who have both room and time for improvement. The older ones don't matter. They know all there is to know about the greatest winter pastime for any and every one under thirty who is possessed of a brace of sound legs to carry a healthy body. This is to be no comparison between what are so often and so erroneously called the "rival" codes of football; but I cannot help pitying those boys who, solely owing to the turn of Fortune's wheel which sent them, young and innocent, to a Soccer-playing school, have been condemned to a life *sans* Rugger—a state of affairs too awful and too heart-wringing for further contemplation. The use of the word "rival" in regard to the two codes is absurd, because Rugby football has not got, never had, and never will have a rival as the healthiest winter game for the young and active. The question of choice has to be considered where there is rivalry between two given games or sports in the suffrages of those who have a mind to play one or the other. But in this matter the boy has no choice. His parents just pack him off to some school whose established game he plays. Sometimes the father sends him to a certain school *because* it plays Rugger, or *because* it plays Soccer; sometimes he sends him to a school because the head master has a supple right arm, a cane that "comes up well," and a jolly good "eye"; sometimes because it is near the sea; sometimes because it is on the hills; and here and there mother steps in, and chooses the school because the matron of the boarding-house seems to be a good sort with hidden stores of jam somewhere within reach. But never is a kid given the choice between Rugger and Soccer. So that there is no rivalry as between the two games—fortunately for the Soccer schools. If every intelligent boy were allowed to play in a dozen games under each code, then given his choice of school, and *then sent to the one he chose*, the Soccer schools would be empty.

From the above it may be gleaned that I am rather keen on the game of Rugby football, which some school that does not play it nicknamed Rugger. Or was that name given to it at the 'Varsity? If so, by whom? One has never heard. It isn't a bad name for it, and has the merit of being known wherever it is used as referring to Rugby football and nothing else. Soccer I don't like as a nickname for a game. Sounds too much like an inferior quick-lunch food, or a brass polish.

I propose to begin at the beginning, and, if you like to term it so, to lay down the law of the A B C of Rugger. A fair amount of experience of watching big Rugger after playing in little Rugger has convinced me that it is from lack of knowledge of the A B C of the game that most players on leaving school suffer. They have learnt to run before they can walk, to swim before they have gone into the water. Only last season we were pained to see an old public-school boy and former International three-quarter running down England's left-wing with the ball tucked under his *right* arm! Can ignorance of the rudiments of Rugger be more abysmal than this? Here was a representative of one of our oldest Rugger-playing schools guilty of one of the most serious faults possible in a wing three-quarter—especially in a wing who does not rely upon dodging and feinting ability to win his way over the line.

The beginning of success in this game rests in wearing the right kind of clothes,

especially boots. A Lowe or a Poulton indifferently shod makes the fourth-class players round him appear nearly first. Whether it be studs or bars, or a suitable arrangement of both on the soles of the boot, is largely a matter of fashion and of personal taste. We had a few as good players in the old days before studs and thin-soled boots were the fashion as are to be found anywhere to-day. I would not like to state that foot, ankle, and knee injuries are on the increase, or are more frequent than they were. Certain it is they are almost uncannily numerous these days, and I should not be surprised if "specially made" football boots are responsible for a good percentage of them. The modern thin-soled affair cannot possibly give such a good grip of the ground as the old-fashioned "converted" walking boot. To my mind there is nothing like an old and very comfortable



With boots properly prepared you can defy the most slippery turf.

pair of walking boots with a sole at least half an inch thick for playing Rugger in. Studs in the soles are of most use on wet and very soft grounds; but I remember that bars were perfectly satisfactory on the heavy going and mud of the Dulwich College pitch, and should wish for no improvement.

Obviously the modern thin-soled boot makes for increased pace, because it is a slightly lighter affair than a walking boot, but I doubt if it helps a player to such a great extent as to outvalue the older method. The walking boot should meet with the approval of all parents, at any rate, as its use saves money. Remove all the hooks at the top, have studs or bars, whichever you prefer, firmly fixed in its sole (which is more solid than the modern boot), and then you can defy the most slippery turf and (if the boots are kept properly cleaned and dubbined) heavy rain. It should be a maxim for a keen footer player to treat his boots as every cricketer treats his bat, and every sportsman his gun. That is, the boots ought to be cleaned after use *on the day of use* before anything else is done, and after being allowed to dry *away from* the fire, they should be well dubbined before being put away, whether the day has been a dry or a wet one. Then, on the day of the match, if it is wet or likely to be, give them a good "go" of dubbin before leaving the pavilion. Always start the game with studs or bars clear of caked mud, and with all laces in a sound condition. Properly speaking, there ought to be no cessation of play because a lace has broken. This is one of several points in the play and conduct of Rugger that we should do no harm to borrow from South Africa.

As to the remainder of the apparel to be worn on the footer-field, the shorts ought to be of good, tough serge without strap and buckle behind, or belt of any kind except a good stout tape, about an inch wide, sewn on to each hip outside. Each piece should be long enough to enable the two to be firmly fastened in front, by tie and bow, and then to be tucked inside the waist. This method is infallible for keeping the shorts comfortably in position round the waist; it obviates all chance of injury to player or opponent during a tackle, and it generally prevents the ripping off of the nether garment by a despairing single-handed grab from behind that succeeds only in getting hold of an ill-fitting waist-line to the shorts. Similarly, the neck of the jersey should fit the neck and be buttoned, so that it

does not flop about and enable a one-handed tackle to rob the player of his jersey and a try with one and the same grab.

It is with no desire on my part to encourage our young footer friends to become foppish, or to take the field as though each had just come out of a band-box, that I urge the necessity of seeing to all these things, and having laces and buttons in their right places. A team does not look a team unless all its members appear taut and trim. The habit of neatness once acquired by the boy never leaves the man, while it is provocative of neatness and accuracy in play. And neatness and accuracy go far to win matches. Every Rugger-playing boy should at an early stage in his career be taken to see the United Services play, and be made to note specially the smart and business-like appearance of the fifteen as it takes the field. Once there, however, and the mighty opposites are at each other's throats, let me beg of the well-turned-out youngster to forget all about the parting of his hair and the spotlessness of his jersey. If he considers either he is of no use to his side, and that's all there is to it.

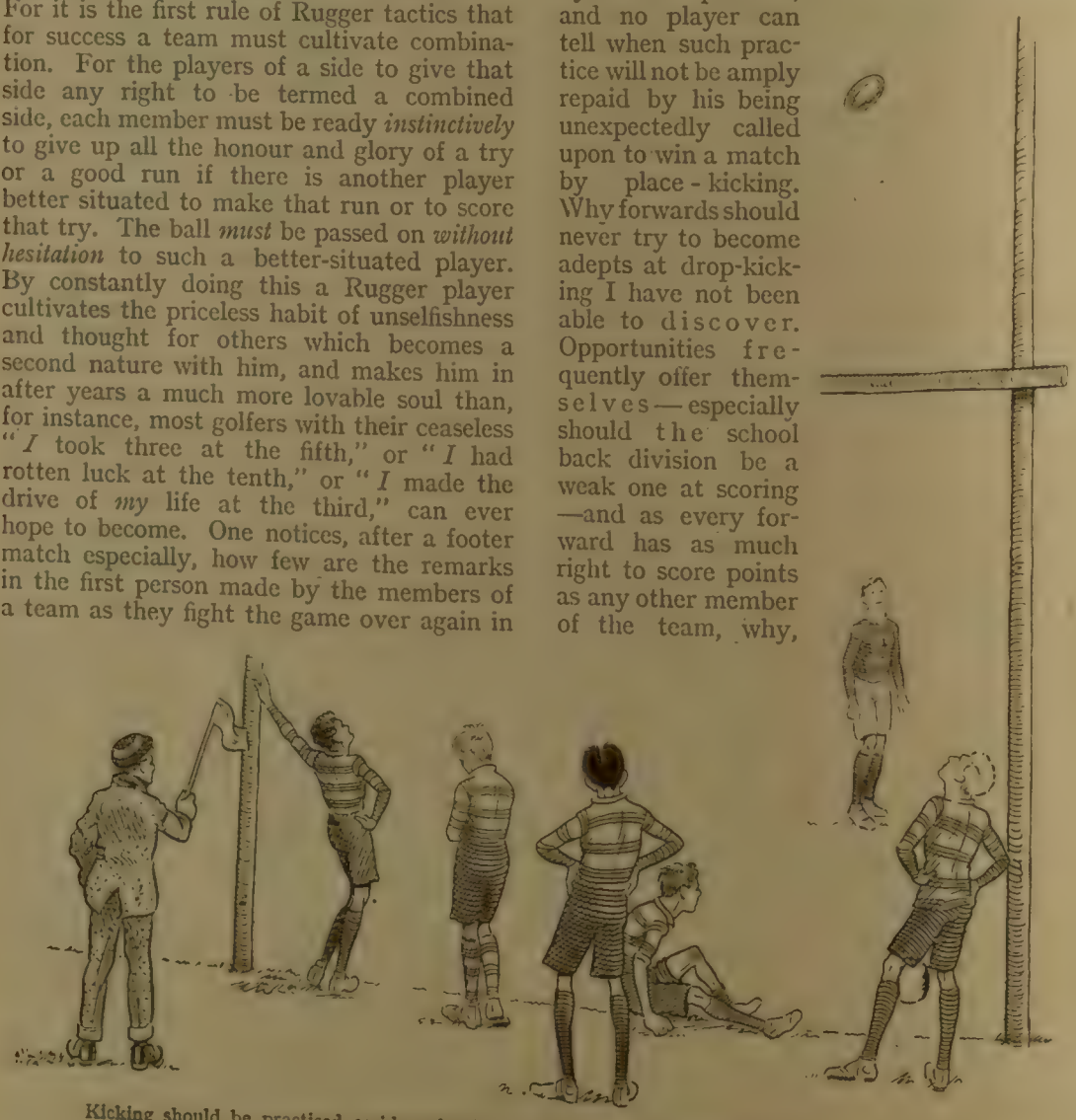
A tackle that robs you of your jersey and a try with one grab.

And now to the acquirement of the way to enjoy the glorious game. The first thing to brand into your memory is that the secret of enjoyment of a game *is not simply in winning it.* There are those who play *only* to win. Let them be happy, physically and mentally, if they can. He who plays solely to win is of queer clay if he derives *all* the fun to be had out of regular participation in the game. I do not believe such a being exists, but let that pass. The mere playing of the game is sufficient enjoyment for any healthy young animal, so, while youngsters, acquire the habit of losing cheerily with an honest smile on your perspiring countenance, and a hearty congratulation to the other side for having beaten you. This habit will become part of your nature, and will, in after life, never stand you in aught but good stead. The mere scoring of tries, dropping and placing of goals, making of runs, and tackling of seemingly certain scorers is not even half the good to be got out of Rugger. No game was ever thought of with anything like Rugger's strength as a character and as a body builder. Not a muscle of the body is not called into play at some time or other during a game, and scarcely a match is played that does not offer the player who means to benefit by his participation in the pastime some chance of improving himself morally as well. You may take a minor sort of part, but you cannot play in a Rugger match without increasing your pluck. The fleet wing three-quarter who is at heart an arrant funk doubtless wins a match or two, but he is, so long as he funks, *never* a player of Rugby football. He is merely a sort of conduit-pipe to victory which we use because he happens to be the fastest runner we can think of for the moment. Pace has two values: it enables a player to win a match, and it enables a funk to keep out of danger. Dame Nature, who is really rather a foreseeing person, usually endows all her funks with fleetness of foot. Have you not noticed this? I have. The wing three who is "the fastest thing breathing," and who has also a lion heart, is rather a rare thing. One might name a few—Dr. E. T. Morgan, Captain B. Maclear, and C. N. Lowe, for example; but how many dozens of

funks could one jot down among the people who have done or would do 10½ths? But even here the value of this game comes up to the scratch, because this type of wing, who in his first days always shirked what has come to be known as "the heavy work," acquires pluck and sometimes in the end faces the music as stoutly as anyone. Certain it is that the pastime breeds pluck and the faculty to grin and bear bumps and blows in a way that no other game possibly can.

There is another thing, too, in which Rugger takes a front seat, and that hand in hand with cricket. This is in the utter sinking of self for the good of one's team. For it is the first rule of Rugger tactics that for success a team must cultivate combination. For the players of a side to give that side any right to be termed a combined side, each member must be ready *instinctively* to give up all the honour and glory of a try or a good run if there is another player better situated to make that run or to score that try. The ball *must* be passed on *without hesitation* to such a better-situated player. By constantly doing this a Rugger player cultivates the priceless habit of unselfishness and thought for others which becomes a second nature with him, and makes him in after years a much more lovable soul than, for instance, most golfers with their ceaseless "*I* took three at the fifth," or "*I* had rotten luck at the tenth," or "*I* made the drive of *my* life at the third," can ever hope to become. One notices, after a footer match especially, how few are the remarks in the first person made by the members of a team as they fight the game over again in the train going home. The habit of referring to the play of others first and foremost is a good one to acquire.

Having dealt with these matters—in an inadequate way, I must confess, but space is at a premium—we will now turn to the more practical side of the game, assuming always the player is thoroughly well equipped to take part in it, and is keen to learn. It is as plain as plain can be that sufficient attention is not paid in our schools to place, punt, and drop kicking by either the coaches or the captains. Kicking ability is all more or less a gift, like bowling in cricket, but there is something to be learnt, nevertheless, by serious practice, and no player can tell when such practice will not be amply repaid by his being unexpectedly called upon to win a match by place-kicking. Why forwards should never try to become adepts at drop-kicking I have not been able to discover. Opportunities frequently offer themselves—especially should the school back division be a weak one at scoring—and as every forward has as much right to score points as any other member of the team, why,



Kicking should be practised assiduously, for no player can tell when he may be called upon—

when such an opportunity occurs, a forward should not attempt to drop a goal it would be difficult to explain. Apparently the sole excuse given is that it is "not the game." But scoring points by fair means *is*, and always will be, the game. Frequently one sees a forward in possession of the ball within range of goal with most of his backs either "marked" or *hors de combat* through having been tackled, while he himself is more or less hemmed in. What is he to do? In ninety-nine cases out of a hundred he bows to fashion, flings the ball away in the direction of the most unhampered looking of his comrades, and—yet another scrum is soon formed! Whereas, had he had a "snapshot" for goal he might have added a valuable four points to his side's score; the ball might have struck the bar or a post, and, bouncing back, have given one of his fellows a most unexpected "opening" for a try; or, going wide of the post, have given an alert wing a chance of trying his pace against that of the opposing full back for a score, or a save, in the corner.

But no! Our schools for the most part coach on the stodgiest of lines, and even in this era of fast, open, unorthodox play, do not sufficiently encourage their forwards to be convertible into three-quarters *on the spur of the moment*.

Every forward ought to be constant in his practice of place and drop kicking, and should not neglect the short sharp punt into touch in as little elbow-room as possible for use at line-outs in his own twenty-five. It is a waste of good material to permit

to win a match by converting a try.

forwards to imagine that their only *raison d'être* is to form down for the scrum, to "get" the ball, to heel, hold, or wheel it, and to break up quickly whether their side is attacking or defending. Every forward should bear in mind, whether his coach or captain likes it or not, that he is part and parcel of a game of *foot*-ball, which, to be more explicit, means that a ball is to be propelled over a bar and between two posts by the foot. It is as much his duty to train to become expert in place, punt, and drop kicking as it is incumbent on him to learn how to dribble the ball.

This being so, it is much more necessary for the backs to make themselves adepts in these branches of the game. Rare is the back in first-class football to-day who, during a match, can find touch sixty yards down wind with a punt. Rarer still he who can find touch twenty yards up wind. So very few onlookers at our big Rugby matches to-day know anything whatsoever about the game that they applaud every kick quite regardless of its necessity, its length, or direction, or whether it was made under difficulties or not. There is a section that applauds every kick, and another that applauds because the first one has applauded. So that your schoolboy thirsting for knowledge will be very ill-advised if he goes to our big club or international games and judges punting on the noise succeeding it. Rather let him study the masterpieces produced by R. A. Lloyd, unsurpassed for direction and accuracy, or the deft left-foot touches of R. W. Poulton-Palmer, or the distance C. N. Lowe gains from almost impossible positions, or the accurate "drops" of J. C. M. Lewis or J. Pearson. Here is a wide selection for him to choose from. To be as good as either man I name should be the goal of every schoolboy under sixteen to-day.

For punting, hold the ball with the right hand underneath to the side, the left hand towards the top to the left, and the point, or nose, of the ball pointing in the desired direction. Toss the ball without spin or twist of any kind, slightly in front of you, and let it have the full force of your kicking power, causing boot to meet the ball just on or slightly below the instep. Let the foot follow through, *in the direction you wish the ball to go*, as far as you can, and kick the ball up at, roughly speaking, an angle of 35degs. to 40degs. About 50degs. if the wind

is behind you, and about 20degs. if against the wind. Aim for a few yards nearer to you on the touch-line than you know you can reach (every kicker can easily learn his limit of kick just as every cricketer can discover his throwing limit) in order to make sure of finding touch. That is, on a windless day. If punting down touch on the right, with the wind blowing high from the left, aim high and farther than your limit; and *vice versa*. The cross wind will blow the ball "in" to your limit. Some people—not many—have so studied the art of punting as to enable them to kick in such a way as to put side-spin on the ball, and thus enable it to bore its way against a head or side wind, and this is worth practising *after* plain punting has been mastered.

But, to be quite frank, many screw-kicks, so-called clever, are the purest of flukes. The applauded player who has found an astonishing forty yards touch with one, if asked next day to show how it is done, will very likely be unable to produce even a colourable imitation thereof. So let my readers learn the plain punt and master it, and leave the trickery to come of itself.

The drop-kick is produced by holding the ball in the same way as for the punt, only with the left hand lower than the right and the nose of the ball therefore pointing earthwards. The ball is leaning back from the desired direction to the players at an angle of about 60degs. with the ground. It is then tossed slightly forward without spin, and allowed to drop at such a distance in front of the player that he has time to take one step forward on to the left foot in order to secure position for the right leg and foot to swing on to the ball just as it rises, and to kick it much in the same way as a cricket bat times and hits the ball in the case of a half volley. A boy of seventeen ought to be able to drop goals from thirty-five yards with tolerable certainty, and a fifty yards goal is not beyond his reach. A long run is not necessary for drop-kicking, as many long drops being made from a one-step kick as from one of two, three, or more steps.

The same remark applies to placed goals *if the ball has been correctly placed*, which in eight or nine cases out of ten in footer of to-day is not the case. There may, and doubtless are, excellent reasons for the modern method of making the "place," and of resting the ball in it. This method is for the kicker to turn his back on the goal-posts, and to proceed to dig a pit (some inches deep when the ground is soft) *into* which the ball is more or less accurately buried by the half-back who so often mars this function. An appreciable portion of the ball being out of sight and hindered by the pit from departing truly in the direction in which it is kicked, most modern "experts" proceed to take much too long a run before kicking, and, having kicked, marvel after all these preparations that "no goal" is the result.

Whereas had the "place" been properly made and a reasonable run taken, the chances are ever so much more in the kicker's favour. To make a "place": face goal, dig the heel once firmly into the ground which, if soft, will suffice; if it is hard, dig once or twice, and spin round once on the heel, or "work" the heel round to the right and left with a screwing motion until the "place" is just a plain smooth-edged circular indentation. "On" rather than "in" this any Rugby ball will rest securely, if the half-back has ordinary intelligence. The ball when kicked will not be deflected by a wall of mud in front of it as in the case of the modern "place."

Place-kicking in first-class football is absolutely bad, save with such very rare exceptions as D. F. T. Morkel, of South Africa, and D. Lambert, of the Harlequins. They belong to the few who could place-kick from any kind of a "place," but they are not for schoolboys to imitate—except in the systematic way in which A. D. Stoop places for Lambert. It is as well for the same two players in a school team to always have the management of this branch of scoring. Then, if the kicker *keeps his eye on the ball* and not on the goal *while in the act of kicking*, all will be well. Given always, *frequent practice* during spare time.

(Next month's article will contain some valuable advice on forward play.)

— The — Turning Point

A Story of the Cliff-Dwellers of New Mexico

By JOHN MACKIE

Illustrated by George Soper

I

"THE Head-man and the elders want you," cried Pocatel, breathlessly. He had not even the decency to conceal his elation as the bearer of bad news.

Ortiz, the lad whom he addressed, stopped in his task of fixing a freshly chipped arrow-head to a new shaft, and regarded the intruder with uneasiness and annoyance.

"How did you happen to know I was here, Pocatel?" he asked. "There are thousands of these caves in the valley. Have you been spying on me?" He would not give the lad who hated him the satisfaction of thinking that his order to appear before the Head-man and elders of the commune caused him any particular perturbation. He knew very well that no one was ever sent for unless something of a serious nature was in the wind.

"Perhaps someone among your very particular friends told me," flung back the jealous Pocatel, annoyed by the composure with which the youth whom he so much disliked took the significant message. He was also emboldened by the thought that, seeing Ortiz was evidently in the black books of the elders, he would think twice before doing anything unpleasant to their messenger. But he had once more misjudged the character of his fellow-tribesman.

"Pocatel," said Ortiz, quietly laying aside his work and rising leisurely to his feet, "since I have known you—and we have both lived in this valley all our lives—you have gone out of your way to show how you dislike me. Despite the laws of the commune about brawling, I wonder how I have kept my hands off you. But now that you have lied to my face about one of my greatest friends, I am going to have it out with you."

Almost before Pocatel could realise that the hitherto passive Ortiz was going to risk the further displeasure of the people's councillors by laying violent hands on one of their deputies, Ortiz had stepped between him and the mouth of the cave, at the same time as best

Pocatel poised the huge stone aloft ready to hurl it at his enemy, when a girl appeared at the cave's entrance.

he could divesting himself of the loose home-spun garments that hampered his supple, well-knit limbs.

"Make ready, Pocatel," he cried, keeping a wary eye on his old enemy. "You'd have given me short enough notice if you could only have screwed up courage enough to do with your hands what you have been doing with your slandering tongue. But we'll settle it now once and for all who is to be master."

"It's against the laws of our people to settle such matters before we've had the sanction of the council," said Pocatel, nervously. "Besides, they have sent me to tell you to come to them; they are waiting for you now."

"We need not keep them long," said Ortiz. "I can guess what you've been saying about me—that I've been hunting and making arrow-heads, and possibly doing other things when I ought to have been seeing to the trenches and working in the fields. I may not get such another chance of reckoning with you if I delay now. Get ready!"

Pocatel was trying to edge to the mouth of the cave past the angry Ortiz, when the latter, guessing his intentions, made a grab at the loose shirt, almost tearing it from his body.

"Off with it!" he cried. "You can't wrestle wearing a thing like that. I'll do it for you if you don't."

The thing was done in another minute, and the two lads now stood facing each other, a few feet apart. Both were slightly inclined forward, with hands breast high, each watching the other keenly to seize the advantage when it came to grips. The rulers of the commune and their strict laws regarding the unauthorised settling of personal disputes by private combat were now forgotten. The long-suppressed feud could be held in check no longer. Something serious had to happen before there could ever be such a thing as peace or even armed neutrality again. The opportunity so long denied them had come at last. The only wonder was it had not come long ago.

Away down the wide valley between the high perpendicular cliffs, against the face of which the airy tiers of dwellings were plastered like swallows' nests against some friendly gable or chalk pit, were fields of beans and maize, and everywhere conduits of clay and wood that carried the waters of the now attenuated stream to the thirsty soil. Everywhere were busy workers—men, women, and children—but they had no part just then in the sudden outburst of passion that held sway in the hearts of the two youths.

Leaning forward till their foreheads almost touched, each peering into the other's face, they circled for a minute, waiting for the movement that might give the desired advantage. Then simultaneously they closed and gripped. At first their anger got the better of their skill and judgment, and both spun wildly round in a futile endeavour to snatch a speedy victory. That would have been the time for the one who kept his head to seize his opportunity and down the other. But neither at the first fierce onslaught was equal to it. Their frantic efforts were impotent and futile.

Perhaps, oddly enough, it was Pocatel who first steadied down to a methodical plan of attack. They had swayed and spun now this way and then that, each neglecting to seize the obvious advantage which in a calm state of mind would readily have suggested itself. Ortiz in a wild endeavour to press on the small of his enemy's back and force him backwards and off his balance, himself overbalanced, with the result that, before he could recover himself, he had tipped to one side and was at the mercy of his opponent. Instinctively he loosened his grip on the other in order to save himself in the fall that threatened. That movement proved his undoing.

Pocatel jerked him sideways by an unexpected movement, and Ortiz spun round helplessly. There was no such thing as trying to save himself. There was no time to do that. It was the unexpected that had happened. A tiny ledge caught his left heel, and he was dashed violently to the ground, his head coming in violent contact with the tufa or lava floor. He lay for the moment as if dead—his eyes staring blankly upwards at the roof of the cavern.

Pocatel saw his opportunity and hesitated not a moment. When Ortiz realised his fell purpose, a look of enlightenment and horror met Pocatel's gaze. Dislike and even hatred had been between them, but murder was too terrible a thing—something outside the wildest imaginings of Ortiz. It was now as if he pitied his would-be murderer for having even conceived such a thought.

But Pocatel's hatred outweighed all other considerations just then. Catching up a large stone in both hands, he was in the act of poising it over his head when a girl suddenly appeared in the entrance to the cave. Horror for the moment seemed to hold her, but it was only for a moment. With a shrill cry she ran towards the would-be murderer, and ere the stone left

his hand she was already close up to him, and had pushed on his right arm.

The missile crashed to the ground within a foot of Ortiz's upturned face. Hate and horror showed on the girl's face.

"Pocatel," she cried, "have you gone mad, or do I see you now as I have seen you of late in my dreams?"

"I was sent to fetch him before the council when he attacked me," cried Pocatel, now strangely quiet. The fact that he had been on the brink of committing a base murder was beginning to dawn upon him. The full enormity of the thwarted crime appalled him. It was not alone the grim penalty that would have been exacted for the deed by the commune, but there was a tradition amongst his people of the deathless curse and unavailing remorse that awaits the man or woman who follows the lead of Cain. In a flash he saw what he had somehow failed to see before—the end to which his insane hatred was hurrying him along. It was as if a search-light had been turned on his hitherto beclouded soul.

Next moment he was down on his knees by the side of his enemy in an agony of shame and repentance.

II

It was the girl Zia who kept her head and who was the first to suggest something practical. She seized Pocatel by the wrist and shaking him cried:—

"Let that be till another time. Run now to the stream and fetch water. I'll stay with him till you come. Take that gourd, quickly."

Pocatel sprang to his feet and, seizing the bowl indicated, ran as he had never run before in his life. In three minutes he was back again. Between them they raised the head of the stunned youth, and sprinkled water on his face. Pocatel took his shirt and, rolling it into a bundle, placed it under the head of Ortiz, who now began to show signs of returning consciousness. There were no traces of serious injury. He had been stunned by the fall and would soon be himself again. Pocatel, indeed, seemed the sicker of the two. The colour had faded from his brown skin, and his face was that of one who had aged before his time. The insolent light had left his eyes. Despite what the girl had seen of his changed attitude she turned on him fiercely.

"I think you had better go to the elders and finish your work by telling them where he is," she said, sneeringly. "You can hardly take him with you, and he is not likely to run away in your absence."

"I will go to the elders and tell them the truth," said Pocatel, quietly. "When I have told them everything they will see things in another light."

But the girl, who had not fully grasped the nature of the new spirit that possessed him, only saw a resumption of the old vindictive attitude in his words. She turned on him again.

"And you will not forget to say how you attacked him and would have committed murder when you had him at a disadvantage? You are like a leaf in the wind, Pocatel. There is neither truth nor anything that makes for good in you."

Ortiz had turned his head uneasily. The light of recollection and intelligence came back into his eyes. He moved his lips as if to speak. He even tried to raise himself.

Pocatel placed a hand gently upon his shoulder.

"Do not try just yet," he said. "You will be all right presently." Then he turned to the girl. "I am not going to defend myself. There is nothing I can say that can justify what I've done. I came here to fetch him before the elders, and provoked him. I would have killed him if you had not come."

What further he would have said was cut short by Ortiz himself, who had regained consciousness.

"You went out of your way to get me into trouble," he said, feebly, "but I was the first to use force, and I provoked you till you lost your head. Now that you see things differently I'll go with you."

"That you shall not!" broke in Pocatel. "I am going back to the council, and will tell them. Give me my chance."

"Too late now, I fear," said the girl, coldly, looking towards the mouth of the cave where showed four tribesmen. "They have come to find out what delays you."

She stood a sad and pathetic figure with her arms hanging helplessly, and apprehensive surmise in her eyes.

"Leave them to me," said Pocatel, "I will tell the truth, and you must not interrupt me."

But when the tribesmen came they did not ask for any explanations. It seemed to them the situation explained itself. When Pocatel, as good as his word, tried to tell them, taking all the blame upon himself, they cut him short.

"Do not make matters worse, if such a thing were possible," their spokesman said. "The

elders trusted you, and you will have to account to them. You will all have to come with us, though, on second thoughts, I do not think it matters about the girl. We know her. She can remain with her people until she is wanted."

Despite the protests of the girl that she had nothing to fear, they ordered her off. She would only make matters worse for the others, they said. It was only when the two youths signified to her that she could do no good by accompanying them that she obeyed the tribesmen, and hesitatingly withdrew.

A few minutes more, and Ortiz was sufficiently recovered to walk shakily with them to the great circular commune house in the flat down the valley. Here hundreds of families lived side by side. The stone walls radiated from the spacious central courtyard. The buildings were two storied, the upper floor partaking more of the nature of a roof dwelling. Some families occupied three or four rooms which opened the one into the other. They were all plastered, and not infrequently painted. The larger rooms had fire-places and deep recesses for storing food and household articles. Save those rooms which had low doorways opening into the courtyard, most of them could be entered only from the roof. Everywhere ladders were placed against the walls so as to gain access to these.

On either hand, on the terraces and against the cliff, were innumerable dwellings. It was evident that these Cliff Dwellers had so increased in numbers that it was at last found necessary to build on the level, and adopt the communal type of house referred to. Already some of them had been obliged to migrate to the wooded mesa or table-land which looked down on the valley. These, being perched on the edge of it in commanding positions, were also used as look-outs in order to give warning to those beneath in the event of the approach of an enemy.

Passing through the one narrow entrance to the courtyard, and taking no notice of the hundreds of men and women who were moving about, all evidently intent on various tasks, they reached and descended into the sunk circular chamber or khiva in which the head-men sat in judgment.

Squatted all around on the floor were the elders of the people. Quiet of mien and sober of face, they looked what they were—men who by their deeds and mode of life had been chosen by the people to administer their affairs. The Head-man of the court, though advanced in years, was spare and wiry, with a face like a mask that gave no clue to the workings of his mind. His eyes were dark and intelligent. Calm and deliberate judgment might be expected from one whose every movement indicated self-possession and restraint. It was in his voice, perhaps, that one detected the most human note. While he was spare of words and always perfectly clear and to the point, there was no hint of undue harshness in what he had to say. He suggested rather the attitude of one who, with no other object in view than that of administering strict justice, would still give a delinquent the benefit of a doubt, and even suggest a line of defence if he thought the accused was more the victim of circumstances than intention. The youths were placed facing him within the circle.

"Before I ask you weightier questions," said the Head-man, addressing Ortiz, "we would like to know why it is of late you have neglected your share of the duties in this commune. Speak out fearlessly if you have anything definite to say, for without a defence that holds some measure of truth you will surely be punished. We do not play with justice. When we punish a wrong-doer it is seldom in his power to offend again. Does any member of the council desire to put the matter more definitely?"

"I am told," said a councillor, addressing Ortiz, "that on more than one occasion you have left the Rito de los Frijoles,* and have crossed the Rio Grande,* where on the plains you have hunted the buffalo that seem of late to have come south in increasing numbers. We are an agricultural and pastoral community, not a horde of thriftless wanderers like the Plain Indians. Moreover, we are told you spend a good deal of your time making arrow-heads and weapons of offence. Why do you do it?"

"Because," said Ortiz, realising that his only hope lay in plain speaking, "the old men have told me that the waters of the streams on this country are drying up, and every year it becomes increasingly difficult to irrigate. The people increase in numbers, but it becomes almost impossible to raise sufficient food. The time must come when we all cannot live in the narrow strip of land in this valley. There are buffalo and deer to spare across the Rio Grande. I only went to fetch for my family the food that lies so near to our doors. It took

*Subsequently so named by the Spanish.

With a guard before and behind him, Ortiz was led up the steep and dangerous path, crossing chasms by means of wooden bridges which he knew would be removed at night, making escape impossible.

some getting, and I robbed no one in taking it. But I have worked in the fields also. I have not been an idler."

"The Head-man has told you we are a pastoral people and not hunters like those uncivilised people of the plains," said a councillor. "The point is, we do not desire to become like them. If we are forced to be hunters and roam the prairies, our civilisation will drop from us. Who gave you permission to take the lead in this matter?"

"Let us not be too hard on the instrument that may play the part of the Finger of Fate," said the Head-man with unwonted seriousness. "What the lad has said about the waters drying up has been apparent to our people for generations. In my dreams of the future I can see this valley deserted because of insufficient water to grow food. Some day we may be forced to leave our cliff dwellings in the valleys of the table-land, and have to take to the plains. We shall become hunters and wanderers, and our peaceful arts will become lost to us. A race of new comers from afar will view the ruins of our cliff dwellings and communal house, and our brush-covered fields, and ask what has become of the people that once lived here—where are the Cliff Dwellers? They will find it difficult to believe that the scattered people who roam the prairies and have become hunters and wanderers were once a civilised people who practised arts and crafts. No, we cannot punish the lad who doubtless points our destined way. Let that matter be. Who is it that brings the charge of brawling and other misdeeds against him?"

It was significant to note how when the old Head-man spoke, the councillors sat silent and with apprehensive, saddened faces. They had been told in so many words by their wise Head-man what for many years their people had been fearful to admit or even speak about save in perplexed surmises, that the rivers which divided the mesas were shrinking in size, that the springs were gradually drying up, and it was becoming increasingly difficult to find water to irrigate. It would be impossible to remain there if things did not change, and the outlook was drear.

"We can forgive this youth for what he has said and done in regard to the hunting," said a stern-faced councillor, "but in doing so we must not lose sight of that other matter of which we have just heard—of the ill-will he has cherished, and the attack upon our messenger. Look, Pocatel bears traces of his violence now!"

"Perhaps it would be as well to keep this lad Ortiz in confinement until we gain that information which we must insist on," said another. "If there is truth in the charges, then I say death. We owe our well-being and even our existence now to the strict carrying out of our laws."

It was then that Pocatel spoke, and he did not spare himself in declaring that he alone was the cause of all the trouble; but the elders shook their heads. There was either some interested and sinister motive behind his extraordinary pleading, they said, or his brain must have suffered from the shock he had received. The matter must stand over till the morrow. Whatever may have been done to provoke an attack, he had acted as their messenger, and, no matter what extraordinary circumstances might be pleaded, the inexorable penalty was death.

Even they themselves could not alter the law.

The guards were ordered to take Ortiz away to the prison on the terrace on the face of the high cliff from which there could be no escape. His fate would be decided on the morrow.

III

As Ortiz, in custody of his guards, passed out of the khiva and the courtyard, it was odd to note how the people forbore to exhibit any undue curiosity regarding his plight. They had learned to accept their strict laws without murmur, for they knew how necessary they were. Even the relatives of Ortiz, though sorely perturbed, bowed to the course of the law, contenting themselves with trying to influence public opinion in his favour. Pocatel was ordered to return to his family. The train of happenings which he had helped to start appalled him when he thought of what the outcome would probably be. True, in his rage he had been on the brink of murder, but that had passed like an evil dream, and now the pendulum swung the other way. To free his soul from the shadow of crime he must undo the evil he had brought about. There was only one way by which some measure of it might be averted.

Up a narrow shelf of rock that skirted the face of the great eastern cliff the guard led Ortiz. The path was dangerous and steep. In places the ledge, which was composed of soft tufa or lava flow, had completely crumbled away. Such gaps were bridged in places by roughly hewn planks. Here and there long ladders were loosely rested against the cliff, and

at intervals the mode of ascent was by shallow steps cut in the rock. In unexpected places in great overhanging ledges were cliff dwellings, the back rooms having been hewn out of the soft tufa rock. The wonderful dryness of the soil and air favoured this mode of life, which would have been impossible in a damper climate. In many places square casements looked from the cliff, telling of unseen passages and dwellings behind in the solid rock itself.

As Ortiz climbed to the great ledge, a guard in front and in rear of him, he noted his surroundings carefully. He knew that the ladders by which he ascended were of the simplest description, and placed loosely so that in the event of an attack or siege it would be a simple matter to withdraw them. Most of them were even removed at night. It indeed seemed an impossible place from which to attempt escape. A farther climb up an almost perpendicular rock, and a broad ledge was reached which could not have been more than sixty feet or so from the mesa or plateau above. Here the cliff overhung so that it formed a natural roof. The chief of the guard noted how Ortiz looked about him.

"You may spare yourself the trouble," he said in a not unkindly fashion. "You would require wings to escape from this eyrie. Higher you cannot possibly get, and you would break your neck if you attempted to descend even if the guard-cave were not right beneath you."

"I do not see why I should try to escape, seeing I have committed no crime," said Ortiz.

"For my part I hope you will come well out of it," said the gaoler. "In the meantime you will remain here. Look, there is bedding and soft grass in that bed-chamber cut in the rock. Food and drink will be brought to you. We will also give you a fire. You will have a fine view from here of the Rito de los Frijoles. Is there aught else I can do for you before we go?"

IV

It must have been past midnight when Ortiz was awakened by someone gently shaking him.

"Hush!" said a voice he thought he recognised. "Do not make yourself heard."

"Who are you, and what do you want?" asked the startled youth.

"I am Pocatel," said the voice, "and I have lowered myself by a rope from the cliff above. Get ready and come with me."

"Why should I try to escape? I have been guilty of no crime," said Ortiz.

"The council has heard much—doubtless that which is false," explained Pocatel. "Anyhow, it is certain things will go hard with you to-morrow if you remain here. Better go on to the plains for awhile and hunt the buffalo till your friends have cleared up your character here. You cannot do it by yourself."

"But there are those whom I must leave behind," said Ortiz, regretfully.

"It was they who bade me tell you to go, when I made known to them that I intended coming to you. Look, here are tokens from your mother and from Zia."

"But what about yourself?" asked Ortiz, with a sudden suspicion of the motives of his one-time enemy.

"I am coming with you, I will be your friend if you will let me," cried Pocatel, eagerly. "Hitherto we have not understood each other. We will journey together across the Rio Grande, and make a home for ourselves on the edge of the great plains. There is no lack of water there. And there will be the hunting as well as the growing of crops. I am anxious to make amends for the evil I have brought about."

Pocatel also told how certain members of their families had declared that it was only a question of time before they and many other members of the commune would migrate from the valley and join them on the plains. Long before then they would be pardoned for breaking prison. He himself like many more could foresee the entire migration of the commune. They were all sick of trying to conceal the truth from themselves; the councillors had disbelieved his—Pocatel's—story that he had exceeded his powers and goaded the accused lad to madness. The effectual answer to this would be the fact of his going off with him to share his exile. "But it will not be a long exile," concluded Pocatel. "Before many winters' snows have fallen the entire commune will have joined us."

"Pocatel," said Ortiz, "we will go together. We will be friends for the future."

By means of the rope ladder by which Pocatel had descended from the mesa they quickly ascended to the table-land above. Before the sun rose, the valley of the Cliff Dwellers lay behind them and they descended the plateau again to cross the Rio Grande. This they did safely, and, before another day had passed, they stood on the edge of the great plains, where roamed the buffalo and the deer in countless thousands.

(The story of how Ortiz and Pocatel fared in the valley of the Rio Grande will be told in a forthcoming number of THE CAPTAIN.)

A SLIP OF THE PEN.

BY HAROLD AVERY.

Illustrated by W. F. Thomas

I

"OH, he'll come!" said Crave.

"Of course he will," agreed Radpole. "If he didn't it would spoil the whole plot."

"I tell you I can't," declared Thrale, doggedly. "It's our match to-morrow."

The trio were standing not many paces distant from the quadrangle entrance to Big School at Fenfield College; it was Tuesday morning, and within ten minutes the bell might be expected to ring for dinner. Thrale had rather the look of a person with whom a page of close figuring has resulted in the production of a wrong answer. It was not merely the difficulty now under discussion that troubled him; since the commencement of the term things appeared to have been turning out contrary to his wishes, and now as a crowning misfortune he seemed on the verge of a fall out with his friends Crave and Radpole.

"I can't be in two places at once," he muttered, "so it's no use talking."

It should here be explained that, there being no separate houses at Fenfield, "cock-room" matches at cricket and football were played between teams chosen from the occupants of the six big dormitories; the first round of the footer cup contests was to commence on the morrow, C. having been drawn to play E. The match aroused little interest, being likely to prove merely which team was the worst in the school. The winners were certain to be knocked out in the second round. For some unaccountable reason, on his return after the summer holidays, Thrale had found himself transferred from A. to C.—from A., the abode of promising sportsmen captained by Charlson, the school skipper, to C., with its horde of hopeless "crockery." Nor did this change of quarters constitute the whole of Thrale's grievance; he had quite expected this term to win his place in the second eleven, but the teams had been chosen and his name had not appeared on the list. It was all rotten bad luck, and now he was to be debarred from celebrating Radpole's birthday in a novel and extraordinary manner.

"Look here," began Radpole, "Pragg's your skipper, isn't he? Go and ask him to let you off. He knows you've no earthly for the cup, and I don't suppose he cares a button who's in the team."

"That's it!" cried Crave. "Any excuse will do. I'll hide your boots, and you can say you can't find 'em."

Thrale shrugged his shoulders, and made no reply; he had been trained under the great Charlson, and he could not rid his mind of a feeling that to cut a "cock-room" match was an offence for which no excuse could possibly be given.

"Tell him," began Crave.

"It's no use going to Pragg," interrupted Thrale, impatiently, at the same time jerking his head in the direction of Big School porch; "he's got me down to play, and the team's posted on the notice-board."

Crave retorted, "What if it is?" then, turning on his heel, he strolled off as if to make certain that Thrale's statement was correct. In his absence Radpole returned to the charge.

"I'm going to stand the exes," he said, "so it won't cost you a cent. What's more, it's a chance you may not get again. It's not like one of those show places you can see over any day for sixpence."

He proceeded to dwell upon his scheme. Some six miles distant from Fenfield stood Bruxton Court, an ancient country mansion of considerable historical interest, the owner of which was now abroad. During the holidays a friend of his father's had given Radpole a visiting-card, at the same time stating, in a casual manner, that if it were presented to the caretaker at Bruxton, the bearer and any friend he chose to take with him would be shown over the court. It contained many things well worth seeing. Historical residences

had no great attraction for Radpole, but a birthday postal-order from an aunt having replenished his exchequer, he had become obsessed with a resolve to make use of the visiting-card, and to do the thing in style.

"Anyone can get leave to go into town on Wednesday afternoon," he remarked, "and, being a half, you needn't be back till tea-time."

"It'll take the best part of two hours coming and going if you mean to foot it," muttered Thrale.

"My dear chap, we're not going to foot it. You know Wicks? Well, he's got an old cab I'm going to hire. It's just the thing for the job; used to put in part of its time as an extra mourning coach at funerals. If you sit well back no one can possibly see who's inside. We'll slip into his yard to embark; and, if you think there's any danger of being twigged going through the town, all you have to do is stick a handkerchief up to your face, and it'll give the appearance of relatives returning from a burying."

Before any fresh objection could be offered to this proposal, Crave came racing back across the gravel.

"I say, you're all right," he began, breathlessly. "Your name isn't in the team. It isn't Thrale, J., but Thrale, N.W.!"

"Oh, that's all rot."

Thrale realised in a moment what had happened. Though not related to each other there were two boys of the same name in C., and, in writing down his team, the skipper had made a mistake in the initials. "N. W." was a mere infant, and of no possible use in the game.

"Let's go and have a look!" exclaimed Radpole.

An adjournment was made to Big School porch, where Crave's assertion was seen to be correct. Pragg was noted for his happy-go-lucky way of doing things, and this was but a fresh instance of his carelessness.

"That puts you all right," said Crave. "I don't suppose Pragg will mind, but if he kicks up any fuss all you have to do is say you saw the list, and that you weren't in the team. He can't get past his own handwriting."

Thrale hesitated, and appeared to be hanging in the wind. It was not that he feared the easy-going Pragg. His own merits as a player had apparently been entirely overlooked by Charlson, yet he could not prevent his thoughts reverting to days of service under his old skipper. What would Carlson have thought, let alone said, of anyone who cut a "cock-room" match? It was deserting the colours even if the standard in question were the paltry and easily lowered flag of C.

"You can go with us if you choose," exclaimed Radpole, snappishly. "If you don't —hum—last time I shall ask you to do anything, my boy."

"Oh, all right," returned Thrale, after a moment's reflection. "I'll come."

"Good man," cried Radpole. "As for Pragg, I'll bet you he won't care the toss of a button."

Though Thrale might be inclined to agree with this suggestion, in doing so he would have been reckoning without his host. The end of the summer term had witnessed the departure from Fenfield College of a Sixth Form worthy named Hurst, which occasioned an episode, trivial enough in itself, but destined to have some bearing on subsequent events. Hurst had made a last will and testament in which Pragg and Jackson (captain of E.) were named as "residuary legatees," with the result that, when the estate had been duly divided, these two had found themselves disputing over their joint claim to the sole remaining effect—a canvas sausage filled with sand which its former owner had used as a draught excluder for his study door. Comparatively worthless as this article might seem, for some reason Pragg and Jackson carried on a constant bickering over its possession; at one time it might be found in Pragg's study, at another in Jackson's; once it had been nearly torn in two in the course of a tug of war; Norris, a studious and inoffensive senior, had been nearly knocked down as he encountered it whirling through the air, apparently hurled out of space like one of Jove's thunderbolts. It seemed as if this absurd dispute might go on indefinitely; then a casual remark made by Jackson suggested a way in which it might be settled.

"Look here," he said, jestingly, to Pragg on the day of the drawing for the first round of the "cock-room" footer contests, "my lot has to play yours; very well, if we win I keep Hurst's sand-bag, if we don't, it's yours."

"Right you are," was the reply.

Pragg went on his way determined that his team should claim a victory; not that he had any hope of their struggling into the final, or even semi-final for the cup, but for the sheer delight of "doing Jackson in the eye." That same evening when he entered the dormitory he delivered a short address to his followers.

"Now my hearts of oak—my blinking crowd of freebooters," said Pragg, "just let's have

some booting of the ball between the posts to-morrow. We've got to lick E., and don't you forget it."

Though Thrale was one of those who heard this harangue, it made little impression on his mind; he merely thought the dormitory leader had come to bed in a more jocular frame of mind than usual.

II

WEDNESDAY was fine and seemed to promise a good day both for the match and for the birthday excursion. Radpole was full of his project, and had now some thought of tea at a wayside inn, an addition to the original programme which depended largely on what speed could be got out of the mourning coach. The trio who were to take part in the expedition ended up morning school with "clean slates" with regard to turned work or impositions. There was therefore no likelihood of their finding any difficulty in obtaining leave to go into town, Wednesday being the day when leave was generally given. To avert any chance of arousing suspicion, it was agreed that they should not walk into Fenfield together, but meet under the clock in the market-place.

Thrale withdrew from this final consultation, apparently in agreement with the arrangements which had been made, but in his heart of hearts he was ill at ease. Though the jaunt to Bruxton would be a breach of rule, there seemed little risk that those concerned would get into trouble, for, in the depths of Wicks's ancient conveyance, they would pass through the streets hidden from the view of any master who happened to be strolling along the pavement. It was the sportsman in Thrale rather than conscience which told him that, instead of faring forth on this merry adventure in the mourning coach, he ought to be engaged with Pragg's "freebooters" on the senior ground. He assured himself that he had a valid excuse, and that his absence from the field would make no difference in the final award of the "cock-room" cup. If Thrale, N. W., had the presumption to suppose he was really intended to play, then there would be a full team; if, at the last moment, it were found there was a man short, another C. player could easily be recruited on the ground. Thrale, J., might subsequently be the recipient of one of Pragg's "straight talks to young men," but this would be better than risking a breach of friendship with the beloved Radpole. Yet he was cutting a "cock-room" match. . . . It was with this last thought drifting through his mind that, as he strolled across the quad, he encountered his former captain.

"Hullo!" said the great Charlson. "By the way, where do you roost now?"

"In C."

"Oh—then you chaps are playing E. to-day," said Charlson, carelessly, and passed on.

For some reason, difficult to define, Thrale became suddenly conscience-stricken; he felt he must at least have some definite understanding with his own skipper, and, after a few moments' hesitation, went off in search of Pragg. The latter was discovered seated in his study writing a letter.

"I say," began Thrale, "I see you don't want me to play this afternoon."

"Don't I though!" answered Pragg, cheerfully. "What's put that idea into your head?"

"You haven't got me down to play in the team."

"Not in the team! Why, you're one of the brightest jewels in the whole regalia."

"I'm not in the list. You've got Thrale, N.W., but not me."

"Get away!" returned Pragg, laughing. "You're trying to pull my leg. Just cut down to Big School and bring me the paper I stuck on the notice-board."

Five minutes later the document in question was placed on the study table.

"Well, I'm hanged!" laughed Pragg. "Slip of the pen, my boy. Of course, I never meant that little suckling to play."

"You might let me off," pleaded Thrale. "Fact is, I've got an invitation to go somewhere."

"Can't be done," said Pragg, firmly. "We've got to win, I tell you. Glad you noticed the mistake. It might have got me into a row with Charlson about not taking proper care in picking the team.

"Not only that," continued the speaker in a confidential tone, and with a twinkle in his eye. "I don't mind telling you I've a particular reason for wanting to put Jackson and his lot in the cart." In a semi-humorous manner he proceeded to explain briefly the understanding at which he and the skipper of E. had arrived with regard to Hurst's draught excluder.

"I mean to tie a bow of ribbon to the blessed thing, and hang it up in my study," said Pragg. "It'll be about the only trophy C. has ever won."

With a stroke of his pen the prefect crossed

out the N. W. on the team list, and in its place wrote J.

"There, take that back and pin it on the board," he said. "Let you off! No fear; couldn't dream of it."

The thing was done now; Thrale realised that he had practically burnt his boats, and that he had no choice now but to take his place in the team. As he withdrew from his leader's study, a thought which tended to aggravate his discontent was that the main interest in this potty match was that it would decide the ownership, not of the "cock-room" cup but of a sand-bag draught excluder. Why couldn't Pragg and Jackson have tossed a coin for the wretched thing? Also there was now the unpleasant task of informing Radpole of what had happened.

As might have been expected, the news was not received in a friendly manner.

"The fact is," snorted Radpole, "you were funky all along, and meant to back out at the last moment. I call that a measly sort of game to play, Thrale. All right; I dare say in future Crave and I can manage to rub along without you."

At the appointed time the rival teams formed up on the senior ground; there were few spectators, and the school magazine subsequently dealt with the contest in half a line of print; it was certainly not worth more. But with the great Charlson a "cock-room" match was a serious affair, and he himself turned out to act as referee, a dignified and majestic figure in his first eleven cap and crest-emblazoned flannel coat.

Thrale was inside-right, between Lovel on the same wing and Melks as centre-forward. Melks soon proved himself a hopeless duffer, with no idea of keeping the ball in the neighbourhood of his own feet, but always driving it on as a present to the hostile backs. Lovel was seldom in his place, and inclined to rush after the leather as a frenzied fox-terrier might pursue a rabbit.

The game itself baffled description, and, in spite of Charlson's prompt and vigorous rulings, threatened at times to become almost chaotic.

At the crucial moment Thrale lifted the ball over the back's head, and made a clear shot into the corner of the net.

There were moments when a whole crowd of players met in a dense encounter; there were moments when no one seemed to know what had become of the ball until it might be discovered that Pragg was dallying with it in a leisurely manner in an otherwise deserted corner of the ground. During the first half the contest was enlivened by the performances of Kelm and Pedbury, who seemed to regard a "cock-room" match as an occasion suitable for the prosecution of a private personal feud. As both played left half-back for their respective dormitories it might have been supposed that they would see little or nothing of each other while play was in progress, instead of which they managed to be constantly meeting in violent though not ill-natured collisions. At length, metaphorically speaking, Charlson saw fit to stop these pleasantries with an application of the big stick. There had been a *mêlée* in mid-field, then the whole tide of battle had rolled towards C.'s goal-line, leaving Kelm and Pedbury hilariously bunting each other, quite indifferent to the fact that they had, for the time being, completely parted company with the game.

"Any more of that sort of thing," said Charlson, briefly, "and I'll send the pair of you off the ground."

But amidst all this hurly-burly, almost instinctively Thrale, J., kept his place, and endeavoured to play the game, although repeated attempts at something like decent combination with Melks and Lovel failed completely. Vexed and breathless, he wished, more than once, that he had never drawn Pragg's attention to that slip of the pen, and that instead of exerting himself to no profit on the playing-field he had been enjoying the jovial companionship of Crave and Radpole, now gaily bowling along in the mourning coach to inspect the historical treasures at Bruxton Court.

Though the defence on either side was weak, the attack was even more deplorable, and at the end of a full ninety minutes engagement neither side had scored. No one seemed anxious that the game should be replayed, and the rival captains readily agreed with Charlson's suggestion that, as the light was good, the match should continue for another quarter of an hour. Ten minutes passed with no result, then at somewhere about mid-field Thrale obtained possession of the ball. He had still plenty of go in him, and, after dodging an opposing half, he went flying on over the turf.

"Pass!" shouted Melks. "Here you are!" cried Lovel.

But Thrale remained deaf to these promptings; the tall form of Jackson loomed in front of him. "Centre it!" shrieked Melks. Thrale, however, did nothing of the kind; at the crucial moment he managed skilfully to lift the ball over the back's head, with the quick dart of a fish he was past his opponent, and a moment later made a clean shot into a corner of the net.

"Goal!" roared Pragg, ecstatically. "Played, Thrale!"

But the scorer was not inclined to feel uplifted by his performance, for, as he turned, he caught sight of the referee not many yards behind him, and the expression on the great man's face did not seem at all complimentary. No doubt Charlson regarded that sticking to the ball as a violation of the true art of war.

"Of all the rotten games," muttered the referee to himself as, five minutes later, he removed the whistle from his lips, "I should say this about takes the wafer!"

On coming downstairs after changing, Thrale descried Crave and Radpole in the distance. They were back in good time, and had seemingly abandoned the idea of refreshment on the return journey. Nevertheless they appeared to have enjoyed themselves, for, during tea, Crave, whose thoughts seemed to be occupied with the events of the afternoon, more than once went off into fits of subdued merriment. Thrale's attention was, however, constantly distracted from his former friend's behaviour by scraps of conversation going on at the table at which he sat, relating to the match. They were mostly of a facetious kind.

"I hear," said Wilde Major, "that Charlson told 'em they should go on playing till someone kicked a goal, even if he kept 'em at it on the senior ground all night!"

Thrale left the dining-hall in a state of sullen depression; the bubble of his hopes seemed to have exploded; he would never make a mark at footer; henceforth he would be regarded but as one of Pragg's "freebooters," fit only for the winning of sand-bag draught excluders.

He was in this mood when he suddenly came face to face with one of the adventurers.

"Hullo, Sporty!" said Crave in quite a friendly tone. "What sort of a game did you have?"

"Have you been to Bruxton?" inquired Thrale, ignoring the other's question.

"Rather," returned Crave, who seemed eager to give someone an account of the

afternoon's proceedings. "You may thank your stars you didn't come, though—my word, laugh?—I thought I should have died. When we got to the court, that ass Radpole searched in his letter-case for that visiting-card, and all he could find was a cigarette stiffener with a picture of how to bandage a broken leg. He'd left the card behind him, or else lost it, and you couldn't expect the caretaker to accept the other thing, so all we could do was to come trundling back again. That old hearse of Wicks's is down on the springs, and if you go faster than two miles an hour it bumps your backbone through the top of your head."

"I'm sorry Radpole got ratty because I didn't come——"

"Oh, *that's* all right," interrupted Crave. "You'll find he's friendly enough now. Drive's done him good—shaken up his liver."

Thrale's face brightened, but a moment later it fell again as a small boy, hurrying along the passage, halted to deliver a brief message.

"Charlson wants to see you in his study, now at once."

Passing along the study corridor, Thrale caught a fleeting glimpse, through a half-open door, of Pragg nailing on the wall of his study some shapeless object adorned with knots of sky-blue ribbon; a moment later he stood in the sanctum of the school captain.

"So you did manage to put an end to that infernal match this afternoon," began Charlson, in what sounded rather a caustic tone.

"I know what you mean," returned Thrale, thinking that he was in for a wigging, and that an apologetic attitude was the best to assume. "I know it was bad play—keeping the ball, instead of passing, I mean."

"Not at all," was the unexpected reply. "I know I wouldn't have passed to such rotters as Melks and Lovel. What would they have done with the ball if you had let 'em have it? Simply lost it again. No, my son, and even in the best of games it doesn't do always to stick to rules of thumb.

"Look here," continued the speaker, emphasising his words with raps of a lead pencil on his study table, "in those two crowds of Pragg's and Jackson's only one chap, I consider, made any attempt or showed any ability to play a decent game—the rest were hopeless. I'm going to try him in the second team, in place of Magnet, who's crocked up and under doctor's orders not to play. To spare your blushes I won't mention this chap's name, but you'll see I've put a mark against it on this list."

With a good-humoured smile the great man passed across the table the half-sheet of note-paper which Pragg had pinned on the school notice-board. Against the name Thrale, N. W., with the initials altered in favour of J., appeared a cross in red ink.

This time it was no slip of the pen, and Thrale's chest heaved with infinite satisfaction.

"Thanks," he murmured. "Jolly good of you, Charlson."

A SLIP OF THE PENNY

Charitable Man: "Oh, station-master, I've put a penny in here and the hand didn't move; can you tell me how I can get my money back?"

A Sea-scouting Story ♦ ♦ ♦ **By V. R. NENDICK**

I

"HI!" Jack Eaton turned his signalling lamp in the direction from which came that sudden hail. A coastguardsman was hurrying up the slope towards him.

"Sea-scout, I see?" panted the latter.

"Yes, sir."

"That would be your boat then which I saw coming in, an hour ago?"

"Yes, sir; the *Lapwing*."

"And your camp is across yonder?"

"About a mile away, sir. We are out for signalling practice."

"Been here long?"

"Twenty minutes, or——"

"Notice anyone particular as you came along?"

"Saw no one at all, sir."

"Humph! He is hereabouts, I'll go bail," muttered the coastguard, half to himself. Then he added to Jack. "I say, you nippers might do us a real good turn to-night. I'd like you to take a message to your scoutmaster at the camp."

"Yes, sir. Is it urgent?"

"Very. Time's everything."

"Then I might signal it."

"But it is confidential. To signal it might be to give it away—see?" objected the man.

"I might signal it in Esperanto, sir," suggested Eaton.

"Eh? Esperanto? That new lingo? I've heard of it. It's a good idea. We'll risk it. Start away, my hearty!"

Word by word the coastguardsman dictated a message, and watched the scout signal it in the strange language into which he translated it. Far away in camp, two astonished scouts were taking down a string of Esperanto which when retranslated read as follows:—

Look out for tall clean-shaven man in grey suit. If seen report to nearest coastguard. Urgent.

"Got through it? Capital!" said the coastguardsman when he had ceased dictating. "Hallo! What are you signalling now?"

"Just telling them that this is a real message, not merely practice, sir," explained the sea-scout.

"Quite right! Now keep your eyes open, lad. We would give something to put our hands upon that gentleman in grey, I can tell you," the man assured him.

The coastguardsman strolled away, his keen eyes sweeping the gloomy landscape ceaselessly. A shout from Eaton drew him back.

"Hallo, what now? Seen anyone?" he challenged, eagerly.

"No, sir; but I have a reply to our message," cried Jack, who was reading off some distant signals in Esperanto.

"Bless us! Already?" marvelled the man.

A minute passed in anxious waiting; then the scout turned and said :—

" Those at the camp have just signalled :—

Seen near the Point twenty minutes ago. We are on the alert."

" Seen near the Point ! " repeated the coastguardsman, knitting his brows. " I've just come from that way. Flash back to your pals, lad :—

Thanks. Don't hesitate to detain if found."

Swinging away, the man dashed down the slope in the direction of a little promontory called the Point, and soon disappeared.

Jack Eaton, wondering hugely what was up, sent the message across to the camp. Five minutes later he received the signal : " Come in."

He had trotted half-way back to the sandy knoll whereon their camp was pitched, when he heard sounds as of someone approaching on his left front. Thinking it might be the man in grey, he moved that way cautiously; but it proved to be none other than his own chum, Tom Denney.

" That you, Jack ? I see it is, now," panted Tom, as he ran up. " That fellow in grey you signalled about. I'm the one that met him down by the Point. Where's your coastguard ?"

" Gone to reconnoitre the Point, I fancy," returned Jack.

" What's on ? " asked Tom, as they moved down the slope together.

" Don't know," confessed his chum. " But it is evidently urgent and important. What sort of chap is the party in grey ? English ? "

" Rather. Decent-looking man. Why do you ask ? "

" Well, something in that coastguard's manner put it into my head that he might be one of those foreign spies that we have heard about lately."

" Phew ! " whistled Tom Denney, stopping. " I never thought of that. Yes ! It does look like it."

" What do you mean ? " asked Jack, watching Tom's face.

" I think you've hit it, Jack."

" What makes you think that ? "

" Just this. I was hiding in a hollow under a bluff down yonder, when something fell on the stones close beside me. I picked it up and found it was a lamp. Thinking that someone had dropped it from above, I started climbing up to return it, and nearly ran into a man who was groping his way down. As soon as he saw me he seemed to vanish into the darkness. I was a bit surprised and looked at the lamp I had found. It was a signalling lamp; not like ours, but a thing of tip-top make. Must have cost a lot. The fall had smashed it up badly. While I was admiring it, I heard a footstep down by the sea. I ran that way and found a man walking up and down, close to the water, growling savagely to himself. The moment I saw him I knew he was the man who had avoided me a few minutes earlier. Before I could get up to him, he moved away and I followed. He went straight to the place where I had found the damaged lamp, and began to peer about cautiously. Then he struck a match and searched the stones. I crept silently up and touched his arm, saying :—

" ' Is this what you are looking for, sir ? '

" My word ! Didn't he start at my voice.

" ' Yes, yes—no—what is it ? ' he rapped out, all mixed up, like.

" ' A signalling lamp,' I told him.

" ' How do you know that ? ' he asked me; sharply.

" ' I have one myself, here,' I explained.

" ' Oh, I see,' he said, looking pretty hard at mine and then at the broken one. ' Think you could mend this ? '

" ' At home I could,' I replied.

" ' What do you say to an exchange, then ? ' he bargained. ' If I give you the damaged one and half a crown, will you let me have yours ? '

" I thought it was a jolly good bargain, and I told him so. We made the exchange and he went away. I returned to camp to report, just as your Esperanto message was coming in," concluded Tom.

" And he has got your lamp ? " said Jack.

" Worse luck, if he's up to no good."

" Looks ugly," growled Jack. " The sooner we find that coastguardsman the better."

" What's that ? " whispered Tom suddenly, holding up his hand.

They dropped to the ground and waited, listening hard. A soft, cautious footstep approached. It seemed to stop behind a bush close to them. Jack crawled back, crept away and disappeared. A minute later he came back, followed by another boy.

" It was Jim Rawson, scouting us," he laughed. " Here he is."

" And I've seen your grey man, Jack," put in Jim. " He is just across yonder, with a glass at his eye."

" Looking at what ? " asked Jack, sharply.

" At Fort Nelson."

The others caught their breaths and looked at each other.

"I'm off for the coastguardsman," whispered Jack, aroused by this new information. "Spot that bounder, you fellows, and keep him in sight."

Tom and Jim proceeded to locate the stranger, around whom a mystery had so suddenly sprung up. They found him crouching among some scrubby bushes, still with a big telescope at his eye. His stealthy attitude fully convinced them that he was the spy they had suspected. Jack rejoined them as they watched.

"But it's a bit odd, spying on the fort in this fitful moonlight," debated Tom, "when he could hang about this quiet spot in open day and see ten times as much."

"The fleet is out yonder to-night," said Jim. "It arrived this evening. The manœuvres are on, you know."

"Is that what he is after?" wondered Tom. "What would he want a signalling lamp for?"

"Got a pal out yonder in a boat, perhaps," suggested Jack.

At that moment the stranger put up his glass, rose, looked round for a time, then walked away.

Jim rose and followed him; Tom kept Jim in sight but bore to the left; Jack moved along still nearer the sea. One and all were wishing that the coastguardsman would come in sight, for it would be easy to lose their man in the uncertain light.

For five minutes they walked thus. The man in grey stopped suddenly at times, then as suddenly started forward again. All at once he wheeled round sharply and came running back. The scouts had to hide smartly to escape being seen. No sooner had they started stalking again than he turned again and almost surprised them.

"Tell you what," whispered Jack; "he has seen us."

"Or heard us," nodded Tom.

"Can't help that," said Jim. "We must not lose him."

Now the man had started off at a rapid pace towards the sands, so fast indeed that the boys had to be smart to keep him in sight. After threading a maze of stunted bushes, they came out on the sands. In front was the sea; it looked black and mysterious. On each side the shingle stretched away into the darkness.

"Gone!" groaned Tom.

"Escaped!" growled Jack, disgustedly.

"Separate and search," urged Jim.

The three scouts departed in different directions. Jim's path lay along the shore. He went a considerable distance without seeing or hearing anything.

"He's got right away," he groaned as he peered about.

"But *you* have not, my friend," said a voice behind him.

Jim Rawson swung round to find himself in the grasp of a burly man who looked like a sailor, while the man in grey stood a few feet away.

"Let go!" cried Jim, struggling.

"What are you doing here?" demanded the man in grey.

"We are out practising," replied the scout.

"Signalling?" queried the other with a smile.

A grating sound was heard down at the edge of the sea.

"The boat!" exclaimed the man who held Jim.

Two other figures came running up the slope.

"Quick! Down with him!" ordered the man in grey.

The scout shouted his patrol call before they could stop him; but they seized him roughly and carried him down to the sea, where a boat lay with its nose buried in the sand. Jim was lifted into it. Two of the men got in after him.

"Tell the skipper," called the man in grey, as the craft shoved off, "that this chap has been stalking me. He must not set foot on land until—er—for three hours."

"Perhaps you will tell me what this means?" blazed up Jim, full of fight.

"It means," laughed his captor, "that I understand Esperanto, my lad."

II

It was some time before Jim got over the shock of his strange capture. The shore quickly disappeared in gloom, as the moon was now obscured. Only a few twinkling lights could be seen.

Presently a hail sounded from in front and a big fishing-boat loomed up ahead. Two minutes later they were all aboard her.

Jim Rawson, full of indignation, fired a number of angry questions at his captors; but all he got in reply was that he "would come to no harm if he kept quiet."

The little boat was tethered to the stern of the larger craft, the sail was hoisted, and away they went over the dark water. The scout sat on the gunwale, pondering his strange predicament, and wondering what was at the back of it.

All the crew, except the steersman, were bunched together forward, talking in low tones

and staring into the darkness. Now and then the moon peeped from behind the clouds, and then Jim looked round, too.

All at once he gave a start, and peered hard in one direction. Something white had caught his eye for an instant. Yes! There it was again; and it seemed nearer.

"That's her!" said he to himself, tingling with excitement. "The *Lapwing* — yes — they have got her out. She is in chase."

A third time he caught a momentary glimpse of the white sail.

"Someone heard the call!" he chuckled, thrilling with hope. "She is gaining, too."

One of the men walked past him at that moment. Jim tackled him hotly. The fellow walked up to the skipper and mumbled something.

"No; not a word," returned the latter. "These scouts are up to everything. If he knows, he'll find a means of telling. Keep on the safe side until we have brought the thing off."

Jim pricked up his ears at this. The sailors were staring astern now. The scout was wondering if they had seen the white sail in chase. He was soon enlightened.

"He *has* spotted the *Lapwing*," groaned Jim to himself. "Means to dodge her in the dark."

"Lights out!" ordered the skipper, sharply.

The moon had disappeared. In a twinkling all was darkness save for the Spanker light.

"Surrender!" commanded a voice, and the men sprang up to find themselves surrounded by dark figures with lusty staves.

"Joe," said the skipper to the steersman, "in two minutes the moon will be deep in those clouds and we shall have the light on our beam. As soon as you clear the light, put her head down due south."

"Aye, aye, sir."

which was now abeam and a hundred yards away. It is a red light—just a gigantic lantern set upon four iron legs which go down deep into the sandbank which it is there to mark.

"That's finished it," said Jim. "Whatever

game is on, the *Lapwing* cannot do anything, and I cannot help her. The——"

His eye fell upon the light, then upon the tumbling waves on which its rays danced. An excited look came into the scout's eyes.

"The moon won't show again for some minutes," he ruminated; "the current sets rapidly towards the light. I'll try it!"

He crept behind a pile of netting and drew off his boots. The sailors were all looking away from the light. Jim slipped overboard and dropped noiselessly into the sea.

The heavy looking craft swung away and was soon lost in the gloom.

"Now for the Spanker!" thought Jim, and settled down to swim in earnest.

He made straight for the light, the current helping him greatly. It was not long before he was gripping the ironwork, climbing out of the water. The great lantern stood on a little platform. Jim clambered up to this and sat down to look around.

A ring of ruddy light was around him; all else was blackness. He consulted his pocket compass.

"I must look in that direction," he decided. "The *Lapwing* ought to be coming up soon."

What if she stopped, seeing no lights? It would be rough on him, for it would not be daylight for six hours and more.

"I'm dead keen on getting back sharp, and getting even with that bounder in grey, too," he muttered. "Ah!"

At that moment the moon shone out. There was the *Lapwing*. What! it was swinging round to the southward. Yes, and yonder was the fishing-boat, far away.

"She has sighted the smack. They think I am still on board," groaned the scout. "They are drawing away fast."

He called with all the power of his lungs; but without avail, for the wind was against him. The moon disappeared again.

"The bounder on shore has won!" growled Jim. Well, I must stick it. What's that?"

He listened hard. Then he swung round and stared into the gloom as sounds came to him which he understood. All at once he sprang up and waved his hat to and fro before the red light. Two minutes passed. The sounds came nearer. He began to roar his loudest.

"Ahoy, there!" came a challenge out of the darkness.

Something just on the edge of the lighted patch of water caught his eye.

"Stand by! I'm coming!" he shouted, and plunged headlong into the water. He struck out desperately for that long, grey object which swung round to meet him. Nearer and nearer he drew until he could clearly make out the trimmest, cleanest little craft he had ever set eyes upon. It was a naval steam pinnace.

"How on earth came you on the light?" demanded the officer as the boy climbed up the rope thrown out to him.

Jim rattled out his story, while the officer listened with acutest interest.

"Which way does the *Lapwing* lie?" he rapped out, when the scout had finished.

Jim pointed. A few sharp, ringing orders issued from the officer's lips. The head of the pinnace was put round, and the smart little craft leapt forward like a live thing.

"Listen!" said the officer, as they flew through the darkness. "As soon as I put you aboard, the *Lapwing* must head for shore. Land at the Point and find that gentleman in grey at all costs."

In an astonishingly short time the *Lapwing* was overhauled, brought to with a hail, and the boy put aboard. Then the naval pinnace darted away in search of the fishing-smack.

The sensation caused by Jim's reappearance can be imagined. It was intensified when he related his story, and told of the order he had received, "to make for the shore."

Everybody thrilled with excitement. The *Lapwing* was put about and ran for the Point. Plans were quickly made, and two organised parties were ready to land when the *Lapwing's* prow touched the soft sand.

The eager boys were soon ashore, one party led by Mr. Warren and the other by Mr. Aston. The scouts fell into their places and pressed forward to scour both sides of the Point.

The two lines of searchers had not been at work for more than three minutes when Tom Denney, who was at the end of one line, distinctly heard a voice on his right. He ran to Sam Hewell, his next man, who promptly passed the word along; then he moved in the direction of the voice.

Hewell was soon after him, bearing to the right so as to cover more ground; the two were brought up sharply as they distinctly heard close at hand:—

"You understand, now? Keep close in this hole; then your light can only be seen from the sea. There are more sea-scouts lurking about. They must not get half a hint of your presence here. When I show a red light up yonder, flash three quick flashes out to sea. When it is answered, show——"

"Surrender!" interrupted the voice of Mr. Warren, who had hurried up at Hewell's call.

Two men sprang up out of a cave-like hole dug in a bank of sand. When they saw around them a ring of dark figures armed with lusty staves, they seemed completely taken aback.

"What does this mean?" demanded one, whom they all recognised as the gentleman in grey.

"That is what we are here to learn," returned Mr. Warren. "Mr. Aston, take charge of the man with the light. You, my man, will come with me."

"Then you must take me by force," bristled the man in grey. "And you will have to reckon with the police afterwards."

"Very good," smiled the scoutmaster. "I wish the police were here. Apart from everything else, kidnapping is a serious crime. Rawson, do you recognise these men?"

The two prisoners started sharply as Jim Rawson walked up.

"These are the two who attacked me and carried me away," said Jim at once.

"Look here," burst out the man in grey, in desperation. "Take my name and address. I pledge you my word of honour I will answer this charge at the proper time."

"Not good enough," retorted Mr. Warren. "You can give your name to the police or the coastguard, whom you shall see shortly."

Dejected and chagrined, the men offered no further resistance.

Half-way to camp, Jack Eaton, who was in the rear, thought he saw something drop from the hand of the gentleman in grey as they passed through some scrub. The scout lingered behind and searched the spot with the aid of a lamp. He was rewarded by finding a little screw of paper, which he carefully unrolled.

"Hallo! here you are again!"

Jack turned to see the coastguardsman who had first accosted him.

"Any luck, lad?" asked the latter. "I'm afraid that grey bounder has done us all."

The scout related what had happened, while the man listened in open-mouthed astonishment. When Jack mentioned the screw of paper which he had just found, he exclaimed:—

"Quick! Let's see it!"

Jack handed it over, and held up the light while the coastguardsman studied the paper. A grin of triumph came into the man's face as he scanned it.

"Well done, sonny," he cried, delightedly. "Cut away after your folks. Hold your prisoners tight. You'll all see a rare sight soon."

With this he turned and ran up the slope.

Jack Eaton, guessing wildly at what might be beneath it all, hurried off towards the camp. Just as he came in sight of the tents a deep boom shook the air.

In an instant all the scouts ran together; soon they were crowding the highest point of the knoll, staring towards Fort Nelson.

"Boom, boom, boom!"

All at once the blackness seaward was pierced by half a dozen long white shafts of light. The fleet was out there, as they all knew, and the fierce searchlights flashed out with dramatic suddenness.

"Boom, boom, boom!"

The firing became incessant now. The roll of smaller pieces mingled with the deep-mouthed roar of the heavier guns; and the flashes of the cannon gave momentary glimpses of huge, grim, grey sea-monsters.

It was difficult to see what was happening, but the spectacle was a grand and terrible one. For fifteen minutes or so the tumult continued, finally dying away in a succession of faint booms to the eastward. All the sea became blackness again.

One man at least understood it all.

"Well, gentlemen," said the man in grey, turning to his captors with a sigh of disappointment. "It is all over. There is no sense in keeping up this game any longer. Your home fleet have whacked us, and their victory is a feather in your cap. I am an officer of the Royal Navy, told off on special service on behalf of the Red Fleet, which is the 'enemy' in these manœuvres. We planned a torpedo attack on your Blue Fleet to-night; but"—he shrugged his shoulders—"the men who were to give the guiding signals are here—prisoners in your camp. Now you know all the mystery.

"I'm jolly pleased that no harm came to that youngster. It was absolutely necessary to get him out of the way for a time. Had he remained on board that fishing-smack, the Blue Fleet would have been knocked to pieces. Well, it's one against us; but it's a real good one to you, and I don't begrudge it."

* * * * *

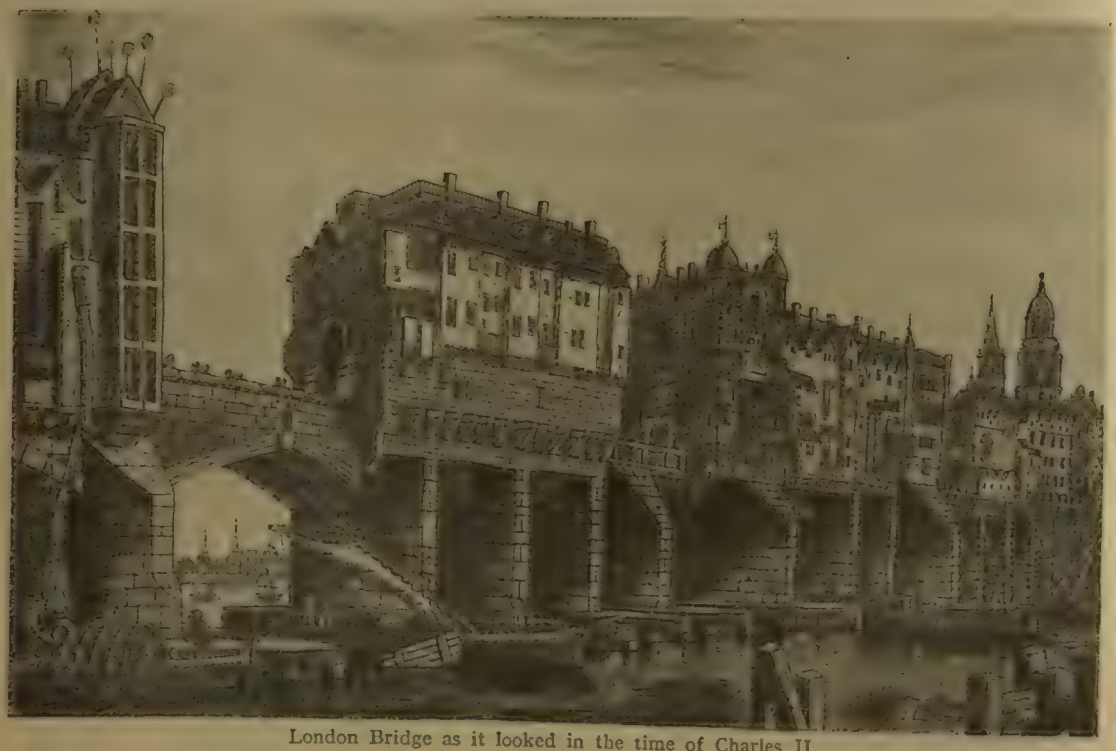
From the *Daily Press* of next day:—

NAVAL MANŒUVRES

A battle took place off Fort Nelson last evening. A surprise attack was planned by the Red Fleet which would have undoubtedly scored heavily had not certain arrangements miscarried. As it was, important information reached the Blue commander at the last moment. The Red destroyers ran full into a trap and were all put out of action.

The Romance of London's Bridges

Told by A. B. COOPER ·:· Illustrated from old prints from the collection of Augustus Rishgitz



London Bridge as it looked in the time of Charles II.

AS late as the year 1750 there was only one bridge across the Thames connecting the London of Middlesex with the London of Surrey. To-day, from the Tower Bridge seaward to Hammersmith Bridge landward, there are exactly twenty-one. Of course, in those days neither London north of the Thames, nor London south of the Thames, extended anything like as far as Hammersmith, and at that place and at Putney and at Battersea there were, even then, three of the quaintest old bridges that one could find outside the Celestial Empire.

Yet if we go back still another century we are faced with the amazing fact that betwixt London Bridge and Kingston there was no means of crossing from one side of the river to the other except by cumbersome and dangerous ferries. And even in 1750 Putney Bridge was much farther into the country than Kingston Bridge is to-day, and Battersea and Wandsworth were but waterside villages.

The first bridge to fill the gap between Kingston Bridge and London Bridge was the old Putney Bridge, which was replaced by the present fine structure, already too narrow for its traffic, only a few years ago, a bridge known to millions in the farthest corners of the Empire who have never seen it and are never likely to see it, by the fact of the Oxford and Cambridge Boat-race starting there.

It will scarcely be credited in these days that when, in 1761, the revolutionary proposal was made in the House of Commons that a bridge should be built across the river to connect Putney and Fulham, it was bitterly opposed in Parliament, one member thus addressing the House :—

" If a bridge be raised at Putney, London Bridge may as well be pulled down. If this bridge be permitted, the rates necessary for the maintenance of London Bridge will be annihilated, and therefore the bridge itself must eventually be annihilated also. But, sir, is not all

London circumscribed? There are walls, gates, and boundaries which no man can increase or extend; those limits were set by the wisdom of our ancestors, and God forbid they should be altered. But, sir, though these landmarks can never be removed—I say *never*, for I have no hesitation in stating that when the walls of London shall no longer be visible, and Ludgate is demolished, England itself shall be as nothing, yet it is in the power of speculative theorists to delude the minds of the people with visionary projects of increasing the skirts of the city so that it may even join Westminster.

"I have taken the opinions of scientific men, and I declare it to be their positive conviction and mine, that if the fatal bridge (I can find no other suitable word) be built, not only will quicksands and shoals be created throughout the whole course of the river, but the western barges will be laid up high and dry at Teddington, while not a ship belonging to us will ever get nearer London than Woolwich. Thus, not only your own markets, but your Custom House will be nullified; and not only the whole mercantile navy of the country absolutely destroyed, but several west-country bargemen actually thrown out of employ."

After this terrible outburst in Parliament the matter was dropped for fifty years, and it was through the instrumentality of Sir Robert Walpole that the bridge was ultimately built. The story goes that, about the year 1720, when a very important debate was expected to take place in the House, one day, Sir Robert Walpole, who had been at Kingston, came riding in hot haste to the Putney ferry, for he was then late. But his surprise and anger may be imagined when he saw the ferry-barge high and dry on the Fulham shore, and not a waterman to be found; and no wonder, for they were regaling themselves at the Old Swan Tavern. This ancient hostelry stood at the side of the bridge at Fulham, and was only recently destroyed by fire. It was in vain that Sir Robert and his servant shouted until they were both red in the face. Either the ferrymen were too much occupied with the landlord's good ale and tobacco to hear them, or they may have been staunch Tories, and were secretly enjoying Sir Robert's discomfiture. On this point history is silent, and does not even say if the nation suffered much by the statesman's delay. It is said, however, Sir Robert made a vow that a bridge should be built in the place of the ferry, between Putney and Fulham, and built it was.

Photo, Benn & Cronin.
A recent view of Tower Bridge, showing the bascules open to allow a large steamer to pass.

In these days of great engineering feats, and the almost superhuman conquering of Nature's forces, London Bridge, although an exceedingly meritorious structure, is just a good bridge and nothing more. Yet it is probably, all things considered, the most famous bridge in the world, not yielding place to any of the bridges in Rome or Venice or Florence in the glamour of its history. Across London Bridge for a

thousand years has flowed the pageant of history. Elizabeth crossed it when the Armada was coming up the Channel; Wat Tyler crossed it when he brought the men of Kent in their thousands to force from the King and his ministers the elementary rights of the labourer; Shakespeare crossed it hundreds and hundreds of times to his theatre in Southwark; and hundreds of nobles and fine ladies crossed it also for the "first night" of *Hamlet*, or *Lear*, or *As You Like It*, or *The Taming of the Shrew*. For centuries its gates were "adorned" with ghastly skulls, the last mortal remnants of those who had been adjudged traitors.

The opening of Waterloo Bridge on the 18th June, 1817, as seen from the corner of Cecil Street, Strand.

The records of the earliest bridge across the Thames are little more than legendary, and, indeed, it is doubtful whether, prior to the end of the tenth century, there was any means of crossing the Thames except by floating bridges or ferries. The first bridge, which was entirely built of wood, is said to have been erected between 993 and 1016. It sustained serious damage by a furious south-easterly gale, and although it was repaired, it was carried away six years later by a flood.

This wooden bridge was probably built again by William II., but misfortune still dogged it, for in 1136 it is certain that it was damaged by fire and had again to undergo considerable repair. Yet it must have been very badly patched up, because in 1163 it was in such a ruinous condition that it was agreed to pull it down and build a stone bridge in its place.

In olden times the building of bridges was regarded as a pious act, and it is certainly a good specimen of practical piety, and so, in that age, when the Church did almost everything, it need not surprise us that Peter of Colechurch, who had repaired the old structure and who was a priest, was the engineer for London Bridge, and was succeeded on his death by a French brother, Isembert, who carried on and completed the structure.

Being the work of pious hands, its architects did not omit to build a church in the very middle of the bridge, for it must be remembered that London Bridge, up to a comparatively recent date, was one of the streets of London, with houses on both sides, making quite a little town in itself. The church was dedicated to Thomas à Becket, a very suitable dedication, seeing that this great churchman and favourite saint of England, to whose tomb thousands of pilgrims flocked every year, of whom the great majority crossed this bridge, was born in London in 1119, whereas the bridge was commenced in 1176.

There was a religious society called Brothers of the Bridge, and if any member died during his superintendence of an important task connected with the bridge, his remains were entombed in the structure. The bridge's first architect, Peter of Colechurch, was buried in 1205 in the Crypt of St. Thomas of the Bridge, still another church, built on the tenth or great pier.

It is probable that the site of the old wooden bridge was between the present London Bridge and the Tower Bridge. The new one was 926ft. long by 40ft. wide, and it contained a drawbridge for the passage of large vessels. It was made up of nineteen pointed arches, the piers which upheld them occupying so much room that only one-third of the width was waterway.

This, of course, was one of the greatest

faults the old bridge possessed, for it gave such a purchase to ice and floods. "Shooting the bridge" was no joke; in fact, it was as bad almost, especially if much water was coming down or there was a strong ebb, as shooting the Niagara Rapids! A proverb was common in those days that London Bridge was made for wise men to go over and fools to go under, and it was usual for passengers by the wherries to disembark above the bridge and re-embark below.

The bridge had many vicissitudes of a minor nature, as may well be supposed, and some of a very serious nature. As early as 1286 five arches were carried away by ice floods and a great breach made in the bridge, which was repaired by Edward I. Then, in 1632, a fire destroyed forty-two of the wooden houses on the bridge, and in 1666 the Fire of London set the bridge ablaze again and gutted more than half of the old houses. After the 1632 fire the ld drawbridge was fastened and fixed, and the houses were three stories high, besides the cellars which were within and between the piers, and over the houses were stately platforms with ballasters about them, very commodious, and pleasant for walking and enjoying so fine a prospect up and down the river, and some had pretty little gardens with arbours."

Originally there were gates and towers at each end. In 1437 a portion of the great gate and tower on the Southwark side fell into the river, carrying with it two arches, and in 1577 the tower on the Middlesex side fell into decay and was removed and never replaced. Meanwhile the gate and tower on the south side had been rebuilt, and was long known in history as Traitor's Gate, by reason of its chief use as an exhibition-stand for the heads of traitors on iron spikes. So precious were those heads in the eyes of the authorities that when the north tower was removed, the heads upon it were removed also and carefully placed in position on the remaining tower.

Blackfriars Bridge at the end of the eighteenth century. It was opened for foot passengers in 1766, two years after for horses, and a year later for carriages.

never used again, and the new houses were built much taller, although they were doomed to be burnt again some thirty years later.

It was during the period between the 1632 and the 1666 fire that Stowe wrote his Survey of the Streets of London and Westminster, in which he says, speaking of the rebuilding of the timber houses: "The building was of timber, very substantial and beautiful, for

This old bridge, having existed through many vicissitudes, and been altered times without number, was in being from 1209 to 1832, a period of 623 years, and its place was taken by the fine bridge which we see to-day, crossed daily by a hundred thousand pedestrians and twenty-five thousand vehicles. It is built of granite, is 928ft. long, and, recently widened, is now 54ft. broad, and its cost ran

to something very near a couple of million pounds. Its lamp-posts, like those on Waterloo Bridge, were cast from the metal of French cannon captured in the Napoleonic Wars. The part of the river immediately below it is called the Pool of London, and thousands of people every day may be seen standing in the embrasures looking at a scene which very few rivers in the world can match.

It is but comparatively recently that London Bridge has ceased to be the lowest bridge on the river, for it only lost that distinction in 1894. On June 30th of that year the wonderful Tower Bridge was opened, a bridge which, despite its unique structural arrangements and magnificent appearance, did not cost as much as the plain London Bridge by half a million. It was designed by Sir Horace Jones and Sir John Wolfe Barry, and is now, and is likely to remain, one of the sights of London. To stand on the terrace of the grey old Tower which the Conqueror built, and see the great bascules of the bridge, each weighing about 950 tons, raised by some invisible power of which our forefathers did not dream, forms a strange contrast between the ancient and the modern. The footway above the bascules, which open for the passage of vessels, is 142ft. above high water. The great towers which carry this footway give this magnificent bridge a noble and ornate appearance. But it is expense incurred in vain, for not one person in ten thousand, except out of curiosity, dreams of mounting the many steps of the tower on the one side and descending by the many steps on the other in preference to waiting, along with the vehicular traffic, until the large bascules descend and re-form the roadway, for the whole operation seldom takes more than five minutes.

In the eyes of an architect, and probably in the eyes of an artist also, in spite of its perfect plainness of design and lack of ornamentation, the most beautiful bridge across the Thames is Waterloo. It was built by Sir John Rennie, and rests on nine arches, each having a span of 120ft. It was commenced in 1811, and opened six years later on the anniversary of the Battle of Waterloo—hence its name. The story is told that when the bridge was being designed the Duke of Wellington, who had something to do with the real Waterloo, was asked which he considered best, Cornish granite or Scotch granite, his questioner remarking, at the same time, that Cornish granite would probably last for ever, and Scotch granite perhaps a little longer, but that the former was cheaper. "Well," said the Iron Duke, "if Cornish granite'll last for ever, I think we might consider it good enough," and Cornish granite it is.

Waterloo Bridge has one feature which no other bridge across the Thames has in common with it, and which very few bridges anywhere possess. Its roadway is absolutely level. Even Westminster Bridge and Blackfriars Bridge, both fine examples of modern work, rise considerably towards their centres. Only Waterloo Bridge runs level from end to end, and, despite its actually being the longest bridge across the Thames, this gives it the appearance of even greater length than it can fairly claim.

The old Hungerford Suspension Bridge, now at Clifton.

Artists consider the view of London from Waterloo Bridge unsurpassed. It undoubtedly commands one of the finest city views in the world, situated, as it is, in the middle of a fine sweep of the Embankment, terminated on the one hand by the dome of St. Paul's Cathedral, and on the other by the towers and minarets of the Houses of Parliament and the grey walls

main feature for hundreds of years, and the centre pier, on which the ancient chapel was built, and the narrow flanking arches, were made into one central arch with a 70ft. span and 23ft. high, and thus, until the bridge's final demolition seventy years later, the old danger of "shooting the bridge" practically ceased to exist.

Company barges on the Thames by Westminster Bridge, 1750. The large barge in the foreground is the City Barge, at that time the finest in Europe. The barges of the Goldsmiths, the Merchant Taylors, the Stationers, and other companies are also present.

and towers of the venerable Abbey of Westminster. The vicissitudes of the bridge have been few, and have belonged chiefly to these later days when the motor-'bus has attempted to negotiate, in ever increasing numbers, its all too narrow roadway. One of the earliest examples of this type of vehicle made a serious effort to leap the granite balustrades, but only succeeded in displacing one of the huge blocks upon which the lamp standards rest. But a year or two later another 'bus toppled over a whole range of the granite balustrade into the river.

When old Westminster Bridge was completed in 1750, it quite put the city's "nose out," as the saying is, it looked so new and stylish in comparison with their ancient pile which had breasted the upcoming and downgoing tides for five hundred years. There could be no doubt that the old bridge was in its dotage, for great balks of timber crossed its narrow roadway from side to side to support the tottering walls of its houses, and altogether it was more of a curiosity than a convenience. This city discontent with the old bridge caused the removal of the houses which had been its

The old Westminster Bridge which caused this repair of London Bridge was built upon the site of the ancient jetty or landing-stage known as King's Bridge, from which the Royal barge had conveyed kings and queens to the city for hundreds of years. The watermen, seeing their occupation slipping away, kicked up an awful row when the bridge was proposed, and, as in the case of the old Putney Bridge already mentioned, persuaded influential people to uphold their objections.

Nevertheless, the bridge was built, and opened in 1750, having cost upwards of £200,000. Great George Street was built at the same time as its approach. It had fifteen arches, the centre one being by far the widest, and all the rest growing narrower and narrower as they approached the banks of the river. It is interesting to learn that caissons, now so essential to the engineer, enabling him to accomplish feats which would have appeared unthinkable formerly, were first used in England in the building of this bridge, but the invention was only rudimentary, and its imperfections caused a vast amount of subsequent trouble.

It was while crossing Westminster Bridge

in 1802 on the roof of the Dover coach that Wordsworth penned his first, and possibly his finest, sonnet, which he entitled "Sonnet on Westminster Bridge at Daylight."

Earth has not anything to show more fair;
Dull would he be of soul who could pass by
A sight so touching in its majesty;
This city now doth, like a garment, wear
The beauty of the morning; silent, bare,
Ships, towers, domes, theatres, and temples lie
Open unto the fields, and to the sky;
All bright and glittering in the smokeless air.
Never did sun more beautifully steep
In his first splendour valley, rock, or hill;
Ne'er saw I, never felt, a calm so deep!
The river glideth at his own sweet will;
Dear God! the very houses seem asleep,
And all that mighty heart is lying still.

Such a splendid work of genius as this sonnet is enough to immortalise any bridge in the world, yet it was a very different London upon which Wordsworth looked at five o'clock on that autumn morning as the stage coach, which had started from La Belle Sauvage at the foot of Ludgate Hill, rattled across the cobble-paved bridge. The old Houses of Parliament were still standing, bare and undistinguished buildings Westminster Hall was the head-quarters of English Law, and was disfigured on the Abbey side by an ugly modern annexe. None of the Government offices in Whitehall were in existence except the old Admiralty and the Horse Guards, and in place of the Thames Embankment there were, at low tide, banks of mud, flanked by unlovely buildings, wharves, and stranded barges, such as one still sees on the southern side. But St. Paul's dome and St. Bride's spire, and all the other fairy-like spires which Wren built, elevated themselves into the morning air, whilst the rising sun would give even sordid things an ethereal glamour which, with the pathos of the human side of London, accounts for Wordsworth's enthusiasm.

If one bridge in London has been immortalised by a poet, another has certainly been immortalised by a painter. In the Tate Gallery hangs Whistler's famous picture, entitled "Old Battersea Bridge." I had the pleasure of seeing that bridge before it was demolished, and a quainter structure could hardly be imagined, as those who have seen Whistler's picture will easily believe. It is undoubtedly the most famous picture of a bridge in existence, and no greater tribute to the fascination that London's bridges exert over the artistic mind could be cited than the fact that a great poet and a painter genius should each have made one of them the subject of a masterpiece.

THE END

Lieutenant Gaskell, R.N., and the tractor biplane in which he recently made a descent at Clayesmore School, to the immense interest of Clayesmore boys.

WHO CARES?

A PUBLIC SCHOOL STORY

By Hylton Cleaver

ILLUSTRATED BY H. M. BROCK, R.I.

CHAPTER I

THE UNLAMENTED

A CROWD of melancholy schoolboys, with their somnolent parents; a schoolmaster delivering an inane speech; a dazed youth in one corner of the garden wondering why in the world he has been presented with the "Swiss Family Robinson" by way of a mathematical prize. A blaze of glory this, more startling than any set-piece at a Brock's benefit.

In fact, it was the annual prize-giving at Cheston House Preparatory School for the Sons of (apparent) Gentlemen, and Mr. Cope, head master thereof, was making his valedictory address to the boys who were leaving. In turn he praised each and all. They were, it seemed, the cream of the British schools.

Then, at last, when he had touched lightly upon each loved name, he began to collect the papers which lay upon the table beside him. Gratified fathers woke up, and, losing their heads, commenced to stuff programmes and things into their neighbours' pockets. Mr. Cope coughed—"Er—Roscoe," said he, "is also leaving."

He bowed, smiled leeringly, and stepped backwards, upon Mrs. Cope's foot. There was some applause. It transpired afterwards that Mrs. Cope was annoyed at this, being totally unable to see that such clumsiness merited the plaudits of parents whom she had never offended by word or deed.

In a far corner of the garden a lanky youth was pushed into prominence by many willing hands; he gazed wildly around, put one hand in his pocket, kicked indignantly at a foot that was attacking the calf of his leg. "Three cheers," he croaked (in a voice that left some doubt as to whether he had said "Three cheers" or "Three years"), "for Mrs. Cope."

"Three cheers," said another voice hurriedly, and almost before the first appeal had been taken up, "for the visitors!"

Standing apart, behind the row of parents who had not been lucky enough to secure chairs, a boy, his hair untidy, collar crumpled, trousers muddy and creased, regarded Mr. Cope with an expression half contemptuous, half reflectively vacant. Parents were getting to their feet and pushing each other hurriedly aside, in the manner of theatre-goers who wish to secure good seats in the pit; they crowded around him, hasting towards the tea-tables.

"Who," whispered a fond mother to her spruce offspring, "is that strange-looking boy?" With her sunshade she indicated the youth with the tired collar and the evil countenance.

"That?" replied the boy. "Oh, his name's Roscoe. Awful ass!"

In the distance many plaintive voices were heard calling vaguely for cheers.

Roscoe turned presently and, hands deep in his pockets, wandered slowly across the lawn.

When Mr. Cope had stated that Roscoe was leaving, the impression remained with those who heard him that the boy was leaving with the rest of the "late lamented" band the following day. This was not so. Prior to entering Harley, the public school to which his erring footsteps were to be directed, he was to spend the summer holidays at Cheston House, taking a fortnight at the seaside under the care of a tutor supplied by Mr. Cope. Roscoe had spent many holidays at the school, usually under the surveillance of an assistant master, though occasionally he had been received by his guardian at the latter's home.

The last experience which had befallen that gentleman had, however, been to such an extent that which modern crispness terms the "limit," that he had decided that these, the boy's last holidays before going to Harley, must be spent out of his sight.

James Roscoe could not remember his mother, who had died before he had even mastered the knack of speech, whilst his father had been lost on an expedition before James had been born. The care of this lone child had therefore been undertaken in a rash moment by his uncle, Mr. Herbert Chynn, who had never ceased to deplore the disastrous results which had attended his guardianship. He was a scientist, a querulous bachelor of nearly sixty years, with the general appearance of an aged ascetic who has been searching throughout life for something which he has not yet found; also his head was entirely bald and had been so ever since any of his present acquaintances (who were few) could remember.

When Mr. Chynn had taken over official responsibility for James's walk in life, he considered that his duty was done. During infancy, the boy had been placed under the care of an irascible and elderly nurse whose life appeared to have been permanently blighted somewhere about the age of six; upon reaching the earliest possible age for school, he had been pitchforked into Cheston House, this school being selected on account of the said nurse possessing a sister who held the position of cook there; and because neither she nor Mr. Chynn knew of any other. This life of James had made him a very unpleasant boy to deal with, a boy of underhand ways (necessitated by the rigorous treatment meted out to him), incorrigible selfishness, vile manners, and warped character; but the blame lay not upon James Roscoe himself but upon Mr. Chynn.

"Roscoe," Mr. Cope had said with great satisfaction, "is also leaving." And the school had appreciated the brevity of the farewell. He was the only parting boy that one and all were glad to speed. He alone had been no credit to the school.

As he wandered across to the tea-tables, surreptitiously to fill his pockets with such delicacies of the season as he could lay his ill-kept hands upon, he realised that some unfortunate was still appealing for cheers for some person or persons unknown.

The last definite sensation which, in after years, he remembered as closing his term-time experiences of Cheston House was a sort of grim satisfaction that the cheers of these detestable creatures around him were not directed at James Roscoe. Roscoe was "also leaving"; but the general impression throughout the school was merely one of surprise that he had not been kicked out before. He cared not one whit; he was as glad as anyone of this parting of the ways.

CHAPTER II

ROSCOE GOES HIS OWN WAY TO HARLEY

DEAR MR. CHYNN (wrote Mr. Cope),—An assistant master will put your ward, James Roscoe, into the train which leaves here at 3.10 and should bring him to Setton at 3.43. He does not have to change, and I would suggest, if I may, that you meet him personally at the station. He is a boy whose animal spirits are abnormally developed, and as he should leave for Harley within an hour or two of arriving at Setton, no time should be lost by him in senseless mischief.

I am glad that you have decided to send him to Harley School. None of my pupils has proceeded there of recent years, and he will therefore find an entirely new world to greet him, which I think will be for his good. I am myself a firm believer in the efficacy of public school training, and I am not without hope that your ward will yet turn out a credit to you. He is at present, of course, a most trying and ignorant boy, and it has been difficult to instil much knowledge of things or manners into him here. Harley has, however, a reputation for turning out men, and I hope the school will make one of James Roscoe. Mrs. Cope informs me that the boy is well supplied with clothes and linen; but I enclose a list, compiled by her, of articles of apparel, etcetera, which it would be well to obtain and pack ready for him to take to Harley on Thursday.

I am, dear Mr. Chynn,—Yours very truly,

WINSTON COPE, M.A.

In accordance with the above, Mr. Chynn sat, on a certain Thursday towards the end of September, upon a seat on Setton Railway Station. For the elderly, abstemious gentleman who neither wishes to know his weight nor to scent his handkerchief, no diversion is provided at railway stations, and it was therefore with a pathetic sigh of relief that Mr. Chynn at last noticed the approach of the train from which James should descend. There would be no waving of handkerchiefs at this reunion, nor would tears of joy flow from the eyes of Mr. Chynn; there would be just a formal greeting, and a lugging off of James. The train steamed in, and came to a standstill; a mass of assorted passengers surged towards the barrier. Mr. Chynn rose and advanced with dignity.

The passengers filed out and away. Mr. Chynn waited. As the tail end of the crowd trotted out, and the train was once more puffing on its way, it occurred to Mr. Chynn that things were not

quite in accordance with schedule, and his dignity fell from him a little. When the station had cleared to a reasonable extent, and he had waited and watched for some time, and still could see no sign of James, Mr. Chynn moved with the slight uncertainty of the very short-sighted towards a ticket collector.

"Have you seen—can you see," he said, politely, "a boy anywhere about? I am a little short-sighted."

"A boy, sir? There's an outside porter, sir," answered the man. Then bellowing "*'Arry!*" at the top of his voice, he moved smartly away.

Mr. Chynn looked at him irritably, then feeling very unhappy and very embarrassed, walked hurriedly out of the station.

Outside he stopped to consider the situation. He felt for Mr. Cope's letter. Finding that he had not it with him, he decided to return home, and re-read it before wiring to Cheston House. He set off with a mincing gait, and in due course reached his gaunt, lonely house. As he opened the front door, a servant shot up from the basement below like some Drury Lane demon, and drew his attention to an orange envelope. He opened the telegram with nervous fingers.

From Hatchett Police Station (he read). Are detaining boy who gives your name and address. Please call and identify.

Now Mr. Chynn had not had a shock of this sort since James had last stayed with him in the holidays, and he was in no way prepared for it. He gazed glassily at the flimsy form for awhile, then called his servant, and sent her for a taxi-cab. In the meanwhile he muttered gibberingly to himself in the mouthy fashion of old gentlemen when annoyed. In a few minutes, very frightened and most indignant, he was being driven towards the police station at Hatchett, a town some three miles away from Setton.

Shortly after his departure another taxi bowled up to the door of Mr. Chynn's house. The bell rang sharply. The servant who answered it drew back in surprise as she opened the door. On the threshold stood a dirty, unkempt youth in a straw hat adorned with a stained school ribbon.

"Master James!" said she. "Why—why——"

"Look out," said he, irritably. "Is my bag ready? Has the old man gone out?"

"Mr. Chynn had a wire," said the maid. "He said you were at Hatchett Police Station. He's just gone."

A smile passed over Roscoe's usually expressionless face, as he hurried upstairs.

"I'm in a hurry," he called out. "I've got to catch a train in half an hour at Stapham Junction. Put a bit of cake or something in some paper for me. I'll leave a note for the old man."

For a while James was heard tramping about upstairs, then he came down again, dragging a bag with him, seized the packet of food which the maid had hastily wrapped up for him, and adding the bag to the other luggage on top of his taxi, he climbed in and, without any sort of farewell, drove away.

Half an hour later, Mr. Chynn, whose condition was fast approaching the apoplectic, was being driven back to his house. At Hatchett the police had sympathised with him as the victim of a practical joke; they had promised to look into the matter. Had he, they suggested, mistaken the district of the police station referred to in the wire? No, said Mr. Chynn, heatedly, he had not.

There was nothing else to be done. He drove home, striving to unravel the network of events in which he was being entangled, and planning punishment for James when discovered.

Lengthy consideration told him that as the boy was to leave for Harley that very day, scope for such punishment was rather limited. In the end he decided that this must take the form of a stringent docking of pocket-money. He had no longer any doubt that he had been the victim of yet another of his ward's senseless practical jokes.

He drove up to his house, and again the maid pounced upon him in the hall, as might a cat at a mouse after a long wait at a hole, and told him her news. In a paroxysm of rage, Mr. Chynn hurried upstairs in search of the note left. He found this on top of his writing-desk, the lock of which had been forced. Inside the desk Mr. Chynn kept his cash-box. He felt for it frenziedly, found it—*that*, too, had been broken open without much difficulty. He seized the note.

I wanted some cash for my fares and pocket money, so as you weren't in I took three pounds ten shillings. I had to hurry off to catch a train to Harley.

Mr. Chynn sank helplessly into a chair.

* * * * *

In a Hatchett hostelry a bowler-hatted gentleman, who from his appearance had spent the latter portion of his life treasure-hunting

in the gutter, sat upon a bench, his face well hidden by a tankard. Upon the bar-counter he had a short time previously flung a two-shilling piece. "Let me," he had said, in accents which had once been refined, "have the value of that in beer, landlord. And when the sum has been exhausted, let me know."

The bargain was clinched and put into force.

"Landlord," the bowler-hatted one had said, after awhile, "I have had a curious experience. I was standing outside Hatchett station to-day, looking, as one might say, at the weather, when a schoolboy came out of the station, a porter following him with some luggage. He called me up. 'Can you spell?' he inquired. Asked *me*, landlord, whether *I* could spell. 'Certainly,' said I. 'Then,' said 'e, 'go to the nearest post office and wire to this address, and say a boy is detained at Hatchett Police Station, and will the gentleman whose name is on this paper call there.' He gave me, landlord, that two shillings, and money for the telegram, which, being honest, landlord, I sent. He said that it was a joke on someone who was to meet him at Setton, and that he had got down here, and would continue the journey in a taxi; which he did, landlord."

The potman, making no reply, stared at the bowler-hatted one stolidly.

"Curious," said the latter, "was it not, landlord?"

"'Tain't the landlord," said the other; "and your two bob's up."

CHAPTER III

THE CAPTAIN OF GODWIN'S

LAING, school captain of Harley, was a tiny little man, with a face much too old for his years, and the heart of a philosophical lion. It was a school maxim that the Judgment of Solomon was second only to that of Laing; if, in an argument, one man, quoting Laing, could say, "Well, anyway, Laing says so," there was nothing more to be said. The discussion was over. He was a good sportsman, and though too small to be much good at the harder games, he had played half at Rugger at one time, but had been so badly crocked that he had been unable to turn out since. He played cricket and fives, however, for the school, and had an all-round knowledge of the mechanics of sport which no other Harleyan could boast. There are stories of Laing worth telling. He was the Harleyan mascot, their little tin god.

At the end of the term—which was incidentally Roscoe's last at Cheston House—the captain of Godwin's House at Harley left, and the head master, because he knew Mr. Godwin and knew his house, and because he knew something of men into the bargain, instead of allowing the senior house prefect to become captain, had transferred Laing from his own house, where he was comfortable and happy, to Godwin's. This action was hotly resented by Laing's old house, and sympathy was also expressed with Symington, the senior man in Godwin's; but there was a certain glimmer of reason in the change. Mr. Godwin himself was a tall, cadaverous sort of man with a walrus moustache, an old-womanish manner, and a totally misguided idea of managing a house. For one thing he abhorred the rule which allowed prefects to use the cane. He had some foolish idea that this licence merely led to a sort of legal bullying, and he had privately requested all his prefects to refrain from caning boys themselves, and to report offenders to him personally. Games he regarded with contempt; he took, therefore, no interest whatever in his house's welfare in that line, and was widely unpopular throughout the school. By degrees his prefects had become discouraged, and the general tone of his house had gone down and down and down, until at last it had come to be universally regarded as a sort of "black hole." The Head must in some way have come to appreciate this fact, and he had thus been prompted to take a really good man from another house, and make him captain of Godwin's with a view to giving the house a fair chance of retrieving itself before relieving Mr. Godwin of his "command." Running one's finger down the list of Harley's good men, one started as a matter of course at Laing. The Head had gone no farther. He sent for the school captain, told him his wishes, made a few *sub rosa* suggestions, and proclaimed his decision. As Roscoe came to Harley, Laing moved his belongings into Godwin's.

He stood now, on the opening day of the Easter term, in his new study, and critically regarded the interior, noting suitable places for hanging things, and for keeping things, and for chucking things. As, standing on a chair, he was about to test the strength of a large nail which protruded from the wall over the mantelpiece, a perfunctory knock came at the door, which opened immediately and revealed a jovial-looking, sandy-haired fellow on the threshold.

"What cheer!" said Laing, looking down on him affably.

WHO CARES?

By HYLTON CLEAVER

"Ditto!" said the other, coming in. "Take a seat? Thanks, you are *so* thoughtful."

"Fit?" inquired Laing, coming down from his chair to shake hands heartily with the visitor, and afterwards standing arms akimbo before him. This was Weldon, captain of football at the school, and a bosom friend of Laing's.

"Apparently," said he. "Ran over a few points this morning after a tub; couldn't find anything broken. They told me I should find you here. How d'you feel about this wretched business now?"

"This 'wretched business,'" answered Laing, sitting on the edge of his table, "is going to be rather exciting. I've just called on Godwin. He is an interesting cove."

"In what way? Catherine wheels on the carpet—picture post-cards?"

"He rather amused me," said Laing, "because he asked me as a sort of favour to refrain from caning any boys on my own authority."

"I heard he was cracked on that," said Weldon, sympathetically. "That's just what's jiggered this house up. When a chap's got to report every tuppenny ha'penny thing a kid does instead of giving him five himself he gets a bit bored. What did you say?"

"Nowt."

"What'll you do?"

"Cane 'em—when necessary, as before."

"Good man; that's the style. I call it pesty impertinence for a chap to ask favours like that of the captain of the school."

Weldon rose from his chair and strolled to the window.

"Jolly hard luck," he continued, "for you to be shunted in here just because you're darned useful. I'm frightfully sorry. Hullo—that's rather a nauseating sight."

"Hullo!" exclaimed the captain, joining Weldon at the window; "there's something we ought to go after with a butterfly net."

"What is?" said Laing, joining him and looking out of the window into the dusk. "Great Scott, we ought to get after that with a butterfly net and a laurel pot."

"Butterfly net be blowed," said Weldon. "That's a maggot. And," he added, reflectively, "not a particularly good maggot at that. In fact, a maggot of very indifferent class. One might almost call it a Mongrel Maggot. Look at his piebald collar!"

Below, with an air of imbecile discontent, a boy who, having just arrived at Harley, had been passed over to the matron of Godwin's (which house he was joining), and had been advised during a lull in the proceedings to

make a short circular tour of Harley, was ambling out of the house towards the playing fields.

It was James Roscoe.

The two watched him out of sight, then Weldon turned to Laing again.

"Seen Symington yet?" said he.

"No. Still, he's a harmless sort of ass. There's nothing really wrong with Symington. He's just—well—useless, I suppose."

"I imagine," said Weldon, "that as long as you let him brush his hair and manicure his nails all day he'll be quite harmless. Who else is there here? Oh, the abominable Menzies. What about him?"

"Menzies is an ass," said Laing, "of a different sort so far as I know him. He's just a cad. I shall be rather offensive, rather—er—short with Menzies if he doesn't immediately come to heel when I call him."

"I shall come round and listen to you being short with Menzies," said Weldon. "I shall love it."

"He shares a study with Symington; and now, tell me whether you propose to lick Gasborough this term, and the men who are going to get footer colours?"

Weldon settled down comfortably into a chair, and outlined a few schemes.

In the meantime Roscoe was accustoming himself to this new Harley atmosphere, and wandering about disinterestedly. He returned at length to the matron's room and received some hints on school routine and particulars of his own programme henceforth. She first told him that he would be a fag. The inevitability of this had not occurred to him before. At Cheston House he had been a senior, and, in his disinterested way, he had never anticipated any particular change in his status. He had, in fact, some idea that he would just wheel himself along life's high road in his own selfish manner much as before. No, he was to be a fag. The joint fag, it seemed, of two fellows by name Symington and Menzies, house prefects, second and third in command of the house, to a man named Laing.

"Symington is here," said the matron; "you had better go and report yourself. Their study is room No. 12. You go up these stairs, and along the corridor on the first floor, and the study is the end one on the right. The junior common room is on this floor—that door at the end of the passage. That's the room all you juniors are allowed to use. Go and see Symington, now."

Roscoe did not say "Thank you" like a polite little boy. He merely looked vaguely at the common room; Mrs. Houghton, the matron, shut her door, and soon became engrossed in her lists.

Roscoe did not altogether approve of going to report himself to Symington. He took the line that a murderer condemned to death does not, on the day appointed for his execution, beg leave to trot up to the hangman and say, "All serene? Come on, then, let's make a start." Symington, thought he, should seek *him* out. So he wandered down the passage and opened the door of the junior common room.

His first impression was one of slight disappointment. He had half expected, from books he had read, to find a lot of merry, chubby-faced lads playing leap-frog as if their lives depended upon it, whilst others performed upon the comb and paper. He had also a vague sort of notion that the performance would stop at his entry, and that he would be lugged forward and either tossed in a blanket or forced to sing a comic song.

Instead he found just two boys in the room; they were sitting together on the back of a bench, and one appeared to be relating to the other some trifling incident connected with the career of Hobbs. This boy looked up at him as he entered, then quietly went on with his narrative; the other, who was maltreating a pencil with a patent sharpener, glanced up, fixing Roscoe with a frown with which he strove to embarrass him as he stood hesitatingly in the doorway. Roscoe looked round dully for a few seconds, then stepped back into the passage and shut the door. He had just had time to notice that the room was large and long, that its furniture consisted of some desks and benches, and that its walls were hung with photographs of groups.

As he stood in the passage he reflected that somehow his entry into Harley had not been sensational. He had not been spotted from high windows and harassed by pea-shooters, nor had he been whirled into a duck-pond by a bully for having his trousers turned up, nor yet had he been asked to play for the school at football. No, he had just come; nobody had objected; nobody had noticed. He had seen numbers of boys since his arrival, but none of them had nodded to him or asked him for a loan. The books he had read had been all wrong.

As he was reflecting on this theme, Mrs. Houghton came out of her room with a large

book, and, seeing him in the passage, called to him. He slouched up.

"Have you seen Symington?" she asked, affably.

"No," said Roscoe.

"Well," said she, "I told you to go up and do so. You'd better go now."

He looked at her resentfully, then, as she seemed to be waiting for him to go, he started upstairs.

CHAPTER IV

ROSCOE LOOKS ROUND

"IT'S hard luck on you," Laing was saying, "and a rotten position for me. We must pull together, and make things interesting, that's all."

"Rather," said Symington, examining his finger-nails. "Rather!"

He had said this several times. Originally, being a man of more or less decent instincts, he had come into Laing's study to greet him on behalf of the house, and disclaim any feelings of jealousy at his own disappointment. His conversational powers being limited, however, to a few catch-phrases, most of that which had to be said had been said in a sporting enough spirit by Laing. Symington had just chipped in occasionally like the grinning gentleman who stands behind the street-corner orator and says "Hear, hear!" with terrific power of expression at every possible opportunity.

"Well, I'll be getting back," said Symington, making towards the door. "Come in and see me when you want to know anything, won't you?"

"I will," said Laing, smiling. "Thanks for coming in. It makes things much easier for me." And as Symington disappeared, leaving behind him a faint odour of flower oil, he reflected that this man was not so very unpleasant a fellow to work with; he could, at the moment, recall many other men who would have received him far less agreeably. No wise man would, of course, have been openly offensive to Laing; but he decided that Symington, even if he was distinctly of the "silly ass" type, was genuine enough in his own way; and, as he had said, this made things a little easier.

When Symington got back to his own study he found outside the door a boy whose appearance was entirely the opposite of his own. Himself he was a fop, and nothing but a fop, from the top of his greasy hair to the toes of his polished shoes, yet there was little fault to be found with his clothes, other than a slight exaggeration of each item of fashion. Before him he found merely Roscoe; merely the Mongrel Maggot.

"Yes?" said Symington.

"Are you Symington?" asked Roscoe.

"Rather."

"I'm your fag."

Symington looked him up and down; a shade of annoyance passed over his face.

"Then," said he, "you might go and wash, will you? And," he added, as he passed into his study, smoothing his hair with one hand, "come back here when you've scraped yourself a bit."

Roscoe glared at his retreating form angrily, murmured something under his breath, and walked away.

He neither washed himself, nor came back.

School work did not begin until the following day. That first day on which fellows returned and new boys arrived was spent at Harley in shaking down; new arrivals were shown the ropes, and others unpacked and made themselves comfortable. Meals, of course, took place at the usual time, and it was after supper that Roscoe was brought to book. Since his brief interview with Symington he had wandered about, called again at the common room, where he had got into conversation with another new boy, in which the latter was excessively affable, and Roscoe merely surly, and he had now appeared with the rest of the house at a sort of high tea meal, still unwashed. The feast, over which Mr. Godwin had presided, was finished, and Roscoe had risen together with the other boys and was going with them out into the passage and upstairs to the ground floor, for the dining-room was in the basement of the house. As he slouched out, Symington came up behind him.

"Ah," said he, acidly, "there you are! I *want* you. Come with me."

Roscoe followed him upstairs and into his study. He noticed that from the window one got a splendid view of the school itself. It was a long building of aged red bricks covered for the most part with ivy. At one end a right angle was formed by the great hall which jutted out into prominence with its stained glass windows and rounded end, and at the other by another wing in which were situated class-rooms on the ground floor, and the library and other class-rooms above. Along the front of the school two rows of steps led down to the basement or "crypt" where were the

changing rooms, tuck-shop, and rifle range. In the centre of the school a part of the building poked itself forward, and at the top of this (which contained on the ground floor the head master's library, a vast room of an uncanny stillness, and above, the art school) one noticed a big picturesque old clock, set in a nest of ivy. The school faced the first eleven cricket and the first fifteen Rugby grounds, and on the other side were the approach and drive from the road. Here the school was well hid by many giant elms, in the centre of which was a statue of the founder. Round the first team grounds were the swimming-baths, workshops, gymnasium, fives courts, and the cricket pavilion. In a lane behind these on one side were the school houses, and on the other many games grounds stretched away and around. It was over the roof of the gymnasium that Roscoe obtained his view of the school, and at the time he did not of course know any of the particulars given in this brief survey. Nor had he time to appreciate the school's true beauty, for Symington, having seated himself at his table and crossed his legs, said :—

" I told you an hour ago to wash and come back here. Why didn't you do so ? "

No answer. Expression—morose.

" Don't you *know* that you must do what you're told here ? You're a new chap, aren't you ? "

No answer. Expression—defiant. Eyes—dangerous.

Symington turned his attention by force of habit to his finger nails before continuing, then he said :—

" As a result I've had nobody to help me in getting straight. You're a fag. You're supposed to do that sort of thing. I wanted to show you where the things are kept and all that. Lennox, my last, has passed out of the fag stage now. Still he ought to have found you and shown you what to do. Now—er—Menzies and I share this study, because it's a big one—er—the fagging system here is not very severe, so what you have got to do you can do properly." He rambled on in this somewhat vacant way for several minutes, at the end of which Roscoe so far from feeling in any way " chawed up " was undergoing a sensation not unlike that of a man listening to several bad gramophones at once.

Symington ceased at last. He would, he said, for this occasion only, excuse Roscoe, as he did not fancy the notion of his things being handled by one in such an uncleanly state. He expected him, however, to forthwith find Lennox, and to inform him that Symington said that he was at once to show Roscoe the ropes of fagdom with a view to a successful *dèbut* on his part the following morning.

As Roscoe turned to leave, the door opened and another fellow came in. He was tallish and fairly well built, but his features were coarse, his mouth ugly, and his name Menzies.

He looked at Roscoe severely, then said in a voice thoroughly in keeping with his appearance :—

" Go away ; you niff."

The following day, school work commenced.

Roscoe had passed a peaceable enough night, for nobody seemed to notice that he was " new." And, finding himself in Mr. Godwin's own form for mathematics and in that of a lean, cynical young gentleman for classics, he settled down to set as many people as possible by the ears.

CHAPTER V

PRELIMINARY FIREWORKS

A FEW days later Laing sat with Weldon and a man named Rick on one of the seats which, sheltered by shady trees, faced the first fifteen ground.

" But," Weldon was saying, " for years they haven't put on a team for the shield at all, and their ordinary house fifteen has been a sort of comic turn."

" I know," said Laing," but hereafter the team will be a serious affair. There will be no more knockabout business. The men must be there. They just want encouraging. They're all a bit *blasè* at present."

" Wish you luck," said Weldon. " I'll do anything I can. Who'll skipper the side ? "

" I shall be at the wheel, so to speak. I wish to goodness I dared play again. All I can do, as it is, is to wander about with lists, ticking people off as if I were getting up a raffle. Then I fix up scrum practices, and trials and things. Usherwood will actually be the captain ; he's the best footer player in the house. Got his third last year, you know. He'd be jolly good if he didn't rot about so. Will insist on asking riddles in one scrum and answering them in the next ; says it keeps up the spirits of the team. Menzies isn't a bad forward, of course, but the brute *won't* keep fit, and he's not a bit keen. Symington is nothing more nor less than a bad three-quarter. Quite bad. But he'll have to play—there's nobody else. We shall get a team somehow. There are

By HYLTON CLEAVER

masses of chaps really—all about sixteen or seventeen. By the end of the term we shall be running four fifteens, and our first will be the nucleus of the school team."

"You'd better bring in that old idea of dashing about in trial games with a switch," suggested Rick, "and touching up the last man in every scrum, and every man who tackles high. It's a paying scheme."

"I probably shall," said Laing. "Well, if anyone wants a walk into the village let him now speak or hold his peace for thousands of years. I'm going down myself."

"As for me," said Weldon, rising dramatically to his feet, "I have other jobs a-calling me. Lectures on scrumming to inferior forwards. Comments on three-quarter play as practised by Harley outsides. I therefore cannot go to the circus, grannie."

"And," said Rick, "I for two. And I, cried a third. Soon the cry was taken up all round."

"Then," said Laing, "I will go with that decent little chap, Laing. Toodle-oo!"

It was as well, as things turned out, that the new captain of Godwin's did go alone. News came to him which he was glad to keep to himself and think over on the way back.

In the village of Harley a certain Mrs. Kent—a female of such vast corpulence that she was only able to keep her balance by adopting a sort of trotting gait—kept a sweet shop where Harleyans frequently took tea. Laing was passing by here when Mrs. Kent, who was standing in the doorway gazing earnestly up the road after a retreating figure, bundled forward, with the grace of a competitor in a sack-race, and stopped him.

"Beg pardon, Mr. Laing," said she, "but who might that young gentleman be, going along there, sir?"

Laing gazed after the youth in question, but failed to recognise any particular boy.

"Couldn't say, Mrs. Kent," said he. "Why, hasn't he paid for his tea?"

Mrs. Kent rubbed her nose reflectively.

"Laing!" said Mr. Godwin, angrily. The captain looked up for a moment, and then returned to Roscoe.

"Well, sir," said she, in the somewhat plaintive way she had, "it ain't exactly that. I don't mind telling you, sir, 'cos you might p'r'aps speak to the boy. But I didn't want to complain to a master like, 'cos I don't want to get none of the boys from the school into trouble, sir. No, sir, suttenly not. Well, it was like this. Yesterday afternoon I 'ad to go over to 'Ailsmere, and I left Minnie—my girl 'elp like—to mind the shop. When I came 'ome agen she tells me that a boy she didn't know by sight came into the shop, and whilst her back was turned and she was looking in the glass I've got fixed up be'ind the counter,

she see this boy reach out and take a bar o' chocolate. Well, another boy was in the shop at the time, though he weren't looking just then, and she didn't like to say anything 'cos I've a ways told her over and over agen not to have trouble with any o' the boys if she can possibly 'elp it. Well, to-day she was suddenly looking out o' the shop window and she see a boy go past. ' 'Ere, Mrs. Kent,' says she, ' that's the little boy what took it.' Well, I 'urries out o' my room and across to the door 'ere, but I warn't in time to see 'im, and just as I was wonderin' 'oo it was, along you come."

The boy in question was now only a small figure in the distance, but Laing had been following him with his eyes, and now, looking round, he saw a Harleyan approaching on a bicycle, and stepped forward and called him.

"Just bike on," said he, "and see who that chap is in the distance there, then come back and tell me. If you don't know him, ask him his name and house."

The boy cycled off with alacrity, and Laing, feeling in his pocket, turned to Mrs. Kent again.

"Right you are, Mrs. Kent," said he, tendering a penny. "I'll pay for the chocolate now, and get it back from the boy. Very glad you told me."

Mrs. Kent beamed, nodding her head jerkily, and murmured her gratitude and benedictions.

Laing turned away and strolled down the road to meet the cyclist on his return. Presently the latter came riding back, and jumped off as he came to Laing.

"He's in your house, Laing," said he.

"What's his name?"

"He wouldn't tell me at first, but in the end he said it was Roscoe. He seems a rum chap."

Laing nodded.

"Thanks," said he.

He completed his own journey, and then returned to the school; at the entrance to Godwin's, he ran into Symington.

"The very chap," said Laing. "Do you know a kid called Roscoe?"

"Our fag," said Symington; "a new chap."

"What's he like?"

Symington glanced at his trouser leg, and finding that this was hanging moderately well, deigned to reply:—

"Dirty," said he, "bad-tempered, and ill-mannered."

"Apparently a bit of an artful dodger into the bargain," said Laing. "He's been nicking Mrs. Kent's chocolate."

Symington looked at the school captain thoughtfully.

"That's funny," said he; "another chap in this house was caught doing that last term. I'm afraid *he* was our fag too. Somebody told Priest, and he gave the man a jawing; as it was Priest's last term and he was pretty fed up, he didn't report it to Godwin."

"Who was this chap?"

"A kid called Lennox."

"Didn't Priest whack him?"

"Great snakes, no! Godwin would be frightfully sick if we whacked people in his house. He won't have it at any price."

"No?" said Laing, drily, then, after a pause, "If you can unearth Roscoe will you send him to me? I don't know what he looks like myself, and I don't suppose any of the fags do either."

"Righto!" said Symington, smoothing his hair.

There are degrees of theft. The schoolboy possesses to a certain extent an elastic view of the matter; only in later life does it occur to him that "nicking" in all its branches is theft. Whilst at school, he considers that minor pilferings do not come under this cold heading. The "borrowing" of a penknife, self-help as applied to a bag of biscuits, pages torn from other people's note-books—all these are innocent commonplace occurrences amongst the juniors. The actual "lifting" of a bar of chocolate comes, however, under a different category. Certain boys may do it occasionally and even secretly chuckle at the adroitness of another who has successfully brought off such a coup, but outwardly they deplore such behaviour, and sit upon it. All this Laing realised as he sat in his study waiting for Roscoe, and when at last the culprit opened the door and came in, he got up and gave a short cough, and as he did so he suddenly recognised the wretched creature that Weldon had designated a "Mongrel Maggot."

"When you want to come in here, knock," said Laing. "The idea is that, if I should be doing anything you don't care for, such as having a bath—which, by the way, I don't do in here—your knock would give me time to get ready to receive you."

Roscoe stood sullenly on the threshold and looked into space.

"Shut the door," said Laing, "and come in. I want to talk to you"

He moved over to the fireplace and stood with his back to it; then rammed his hands into his pockets. He made a small, pert, well-groomed figure.

"We do not want you," said he, "to have any false impression of your position in this school. You are—practically speaking—a germ. When you push forward and make yourself a nuisance you cause great annoyance. You must try to realise this clearly. You are a new boy, and we are glad to receive you and hope you'll behave. You are starting badly. I must tell you, therefore, that you—as a boy—are more wretched, more horribly uninteresting than the smallest sand-worm in the Sahara, if there are such things. Every fly in the ointment possesses some passing interest, Roscoe. You have none. You are merely a speck of mud thrown up by the wheel of life. You cause a little momentary annoyance; you disfigure things; then you are brushed aside and forgotten. Do you realise, Roscoe, your nincompoopic insignificance?"

Roscoe shifted from one foot to the other and scowled.

Laing changed his tone.

"Consequently," said he, abruptly, "when you waste my time by making a fool of yourself, it makes me cross. Yesterday afternoon you went into Mrs. Kent's and stole a bar of chocolate. Why?"

Roscoe gave a sudden start. For the first time he seemed to take a live interest in things. His lips moved, but he said nothing.

"Anything to say?" said Laing.

Roscoe merely gazed bullishly at Laing's waistcoat.

The new captain of Godwin's went to a cupboard and took out a cane.

"We must teach you," said he, "never to do that again. If I hear any more of you in this character you will probably disappear from this school by the emergency exit. This time I have not reported you to Mr. Godwin, but we don't want new boys like you. We must alter your ways. Bend over, will you?"

Now, when you find a lean little policeman being treated with an affectionate respect in a London slum, you may perhaps darkly suspect that he is a known master of jiu-jitsu. On inquiry, however, you will more probably find that he has been good to somebody's dog. In much the same way Laing's influence over people was a personal triumph in which physique played no part. When Laing told a man to do anything, that man, whilst being possibly of a large and ferocious brand, cheerfully obeyed the authority that one could see in the firm straight mouth with the lines of humour at each end, the frankly confident eyes, and the slightly pinched face so frequently characteristic of the diminutive man.

At that moment Roscoe, biggish and rawboned, might, in theory, have heaved himself upon the captain of Godwin's and thrust him crumpled into a corner. Instead he muttered to himself and bent over. There is no explanation of this except the fact that he was dealing with Laing, which, when analysed, is all sufficient.

Laing lifted his cane and commenced.

"You will get ten," said he. (Pause.) "One—two—three—four—five—six—seven—eight——"

The study door opened with dramatic suddenness and revealed Mr. Godwin.

He looked more sallow, more cadaverous than ever. His eyes glinted ferociously. He was at all times a plain man.

"Laing!" said he, angrily.

Laing looked up quietly, then turned back to Roscoe.

"Nine," said he, as he swished again, "ten. Now you can go. And you owe me a penny."

Roscoe, flushed, straightened himself and slunk out. Mr. Godwin made way for him. As the door shut Laing faced the house master.

"Yes, sir," said he, courteously, "did you want to see me?"

Roscoe walked down the passage, and as he went he saw red. Only one other had been in the shop when he had "lifted" that bar of chocolate, and he knew that other's name. It was Gardner. No one but he could have told Laing. Upon Gardner he must be revenged. He set off in search of him, seething with wrath. His little world at that moment was just Gardner.

CHAPTER VI

A FOOL'S TRICK

ROSCOE, hot upon the trail of Gardner, threw open the door of the junior common-room of Godwin's unthinkingly. He stopped suddenly, as he had done when, on his first day at Harley, he had broken in upon two solitary boys; he half expected the sort of reception that an excited cat would get at the jubilant stage of a 'Varsity "bump" dinner. Again he was surprised. He walked in. A spectacled youth of industrious mien who sat near the door sketching out certain highly

"Get out of the way," said Marriott, as Roscoe scowled down at the helpless Gardner. An angry argument followed, then Marriott hit out, and just as chaos was about to ensue the house master arrived.

imaginative improvements on a petrol engine, looked up, then down again. Another boy shot across the room pursued by one larger than he, cannoned into Roscoe, bellowed "Sorry!" and whirled through the door and away into the distance in the most remarkable manner. The hunter stopped as he came to Roscoe, and, giving up the chase, confronted the Mongrel Maggot with interest.

"*Oh!*" he said at last, in horrified tones. "*Oh, oh!* how abominable!"

Roscoe would have passed on, but the other restrained him.

"Wasser marrer?" snarled Roscoe.

For answer the other broke into a species of glorified Morris dance, chanting the while :—

Oh, dear! *what* can the matter be?
Oh, dear! *wha* can the matter be?
Oh, dear! *what* can the matter be?
You are so long in the hair!

"I say, though," he went on, more seriously, "you're about the ugliest mutt I've seen for a long time. I'm glad I didn't miss this sight. Rather hard luck, though, that you should have collared all the hideousness in the world when they were ladling out looks, what?"

This time Roscoe did actually pass on, and the hunter, sighing disconsolately, as if deeply moved by this gross injustice, wandered out into the passage, and slowly set out after the sample of human small-shot that he had originally been pursuing.

Roscoe frowningly looked round the crowded room. Presently he espied Gardner standing beside a form in one corner debating some point that had arisen in Life, with another budding philosopher. As Roscoe came up, Gardner, his back turned, closed his case with a casual gesture, and made to sit down. Roscoe reached forward, jerked back the form, and Gardner fell heavily and with the accompanying pain that some few of us know.

"What on earth are you doing, you balmy ape?" said the third boy, with a sort of amazed indignation.

Roscoe stood over Gardner, his grimy hands on his hips, his eyes glinting; and Gardner, half lay, half sat on the floor; slowly he went very pale, and, biting his lip, held his hand to the bottom of his spine. Presently he gave a sort of dull groan.

The other boy, whose name was Marriott, knelt down and put his hand under the other's arm.

"What's the matter, old man?" he said with concern. "Hurt? Where did you hit yourself? Feel queer?"

For answer Gardner's head dropped back and he groaned again, holding his back now with both hands.

"Back," he said with an effort, and a slight cold perspiration came out on his forehead.

A number of other boys came pressing round now, one of whom pushed Roscoe aside angrily, and helped Marriott lift Gardner up and lay him on the form.

"Who on earth *is* this infernal idiot?" said another, indicating Roscoe. "What did you do that for, you ass? Don't you know it's one of the most asinine tricks you can play?"

Roscoe, looking slightly uncomfortable, merely stood his ground and scowled down at Gardner, who was still in very evident pain.

"Sort of goat," said someone else, "who didn't know the gun was loaded. Let's boot him out of the room."

"I say," put in Marriott, looking up, "go and find Godwin, one of you chaps—but for goodness' sake don't blab how this happened. We don't want him butting in any more than's necessary. Tell him Gardner slipped down accidentally. Hold on a moment, old boy," he added, turning to Gardner, as a couple of boys hurried out of the room, "you'll soon feel all right. As for you," he added to Roscoe, in fury, "you must be absolutely mad."

Roscoe murmured something unintelligible.

"Eh?" said Marriott, sharply.

"He shouldn't sneak, then," said Roscoe.

"What d'you mean, you great ugly beast—shouldn't sneak? Get out of the way."

"I say he sneaked," said Roscoe, obstinately.

"Then why didn't you punch his head? Where's the sense in pulling away the form, like some lunatic? Besides, you're lying too. I'll bet Gardner didn't sneak."

"Mind your own business," said Roscoe.

"Get out," said Marriott.

"Get out yourself."

Then Marriott hit Roscoe smartly in the eye; fortunately, just as chaos was about to ensue, Mr. Godwin arrived, and hands thrust out from the crowd hauled Roscoe away and dug him savagely in the ribs by way of warning.

"What," said Mr. Godwin, pedantically, "is this?"

"Gardner," replied Marriott, with a touch of impatience, "has fallen down and hurt his back, sir."

"Tut-tut," said Mr. Godwin, "more skylarking, I suppose."

"There was *no* skylarking," said Marriott, shortly. "He just fell down."

"Ah!" said the master, sarcastically, "that

is usually a housemaid's excuse for breaking china. What is the matter, Gardner?"

"Fell down," said Gardner, speaking with difficulty, "hurt—my—back, sir."

"Go out and ask Withers to fetch Dr. Sharp, Marriott," said Mr. Godwin.

While they were waiting the master passed his hand cautiously over Gardner's back, and persuaded him to lie still; and when the doctor had arrived and had examined him, pronouncing the injury nothing worse than a severely bruised spine, the boy was carried by some others in a chair to the school infirmary, where for a time we will leave him.

"Let this be a lesson to you, boys," remarked Mr. Godwin, who could be trusted to detect a moral in every incident in life. "We are all prepared to overlook innocent games. Boys of your age are said to require them. Myself I doubt their value, but let that pass. I am sufficiently broad-minded to realise that they are bound to be utilised to give vent to your spirits. But let these games be innocent and quiet. There is no necessity for horseplay, or those whooping sounds which reach me sometimes and are so disturbing. Now and again I can almost imagine you are so many Red Indians."

"*How* many, sir?" put in a freckled youth with the quiet, deferent manner of an attentive waiter checking an order.

Mr. Godwin turned on him sharply and fixed him with the eye in which he had a slight cast.

"I did not say," said he, shortly, "how many."

After this he searched his mind for some epigrammatic remark with which to close, and, finding none, he looked critically round the room, directed a boy to straighten a picture, and left, closing the door gently behind him.

As his footsteps died away in the corridor, Marriott turned again to Roscoe.

"You can think yourself jolly lucky that you haven't crippled old Gardner for life, and been slung out of the school," said he, angrily. "I suppose you're a new chap with a swollen head and a habit of being funny."

"What did you hit me in the eye for?" said Roscoe.

"For nothing—it was quite free. I'll do it again if you like.'

Roscoe stepped forward and, sticking his face into Marriott's in the manner of the errand boy who leeringly inquires, "Oo are you?" if you happen to glance at him, said:—

"Do it again, then."

Marriott put his hands in his pockets, and turned to the other juniors.

"I say," said he, "it's some time since we had a decent scrap at school, isn't it?"

There was a jubilant chorus of assent.

"Then I think we'll bring the list up to date. This beast must be shown that he can't do any sort of thing just because he feels like a lunatic. Look here," he went on, to Roscoe, "Gardner's one of the few decent footer men in the house. Laing's come over here and is trying to raise a team out of a lot of rabbits, and you wander in and crock a man for no reason whatever, and in a beastly underhand way. Well, he's my pal, and you'll have to deal with me; just you come along to the workshops, they're shut now, and there's a nice quiet spot behind them where I think I can alter the shape of your nose a bit." Having said which, he led the way out of the room. "And," said he, over his shoulder, "come quietly and keep your mouths shut, you chaps."

Roscoe muttered to himself, grinned sarcastically, and followed, surrounded by an excited group of young Harleyans, with whom at the moment he was excessively unpopular.

(*To be continued.*)

H. E. L. Markham winning the senior fancy diving competition at Rossall School Sports.

CONCERNING BRITISH "CONTROLS"

THE letters and numbers seen on the white margins of sheets of British postage stamps are placed there purely for postal accountancy purposes. These inscriptions, which are known to philatelists as "controls," have no interest or significance for the public; but they are distinctly of interest and value to the stamp collector.

An ordinary individual buying stamps at a post office, and finding that he has a strip of margin attached to his purchase bearing a letter and a number, doesn't get at all excited about the fact. Possibly he will toss the gummed margin aside, or, if he is one of those careful souls who hoard up all kinds of things on the ground that they "may come in handy" some day, he may tear off the strip of gummed paper and pop it in his pocket-book against the time when he may cut his finger or mishandle his razor. Note the philatelist who buys stamps, and is fortunate enough to bag a "control." *He* doesn't save the gummed paper for cut fingers; he keeps it for his collection, and is careful, also, to keep the block of three or six stamps adjoining the "control," knowing that in this condition the stamps will be worth a percentage over and above their face value either to him or to some fellow philatelist.

It was in 1887 that the practice of using control marks on British stamps was inaugurated, but at that time and for many years afterwards only the halfpenny and penny values were so treated. Nowadays the sheets of all values up to and including the shilling are supplied with these marginal inscriptions. Perhaps a list of the British stamps that have been issued with "controls" will be of service to my philatelic readers. I will give the list first and a few hints concerning varieties afterwards:—

Queen Victoria:	½d. vermilion.
	½d. green.
	1d. lilac.
King Edward:	½d. deep green.
	½d. pale green.
	½d. dull green.
	1d. scarlet.
	1d. rose red.
	1d. rose carmine.

King George: All values of the current set from ½d. to 1s., including both dies of the ½d. and 1d.

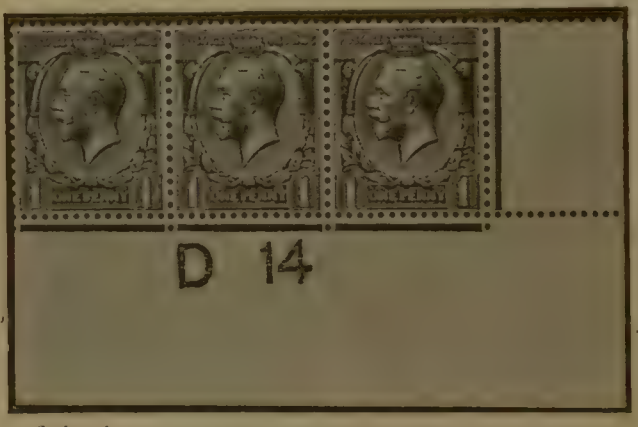
Now this in itself is not a very formidable list of stamps, but what with variations of the line of colour that runs around the pane of stamps (known originally as the "Jubilee" line), the varieties of perforation resulting from the division of the printing contracts during recent years, and the different dies of the Georgian period, the philatelist finds here quite sufficient material for a separate collection.

A brief glance at the history of the use of these "controls" will greatly help to simplify the subject for the young collector. When originally introduced for use on the ½*d.* and 1*d.* stamps of Queen Victoria's jubilee year (1887), the control inscription did not form part of the actual printing plate, but was inserted in type in the printer's "forme," just as you will see late news inserted in the "stop press" space of a newspaper, this being "fudged," to use the technical term, that is, inserted in type after the other portions of the paper have been cast in the form of cylindrical plates for the rotary printing press. At the present time the control is an integral part of the printing plate.

Next, let me explain the "Jubilee" line, which expression is a source of perplexity to many young collectors. This line (a line of colour surrounding the pane of stamps) was devised as a form of protection to the printing plate. It created what printers call a "gutter" all around the stamps, and so served to "hold

the blocks up," as a printer would express it, and thus protect their edges from a too rapid wear and tear.

The Victorian stamps with controls, and without the "Jubilee" line, are among the great rarities of this department of philately.



Strip of current British stamps with white margin showing control number.

They comprise the letters "A" to "E" inclusive on the ½*d.* vermilion, and the letters "A" to "J" inclusive on the 1*d.* lilac. The ½*d.* green Victorian has only one control, the letter "R," and this has the "Jubilee" line.

It will be noticed that the controls of Queen Victoria's stamps consist of a letter only, whereas the custom now is to use a letter and a numeral, as "B 13," "D 14," etc. The new plan was adopted in King Edward's reign, but not before the ½*d.* and 1*d.* stamps had been supplied with the A, B, and C controls without numerals. "C 4" was the first letter-and-numeral control for the Edwardian stamps of both ½*d.* and 1*d.*, and "D 14" is the symbol in use on the Georgian labels of these denominations at the present time. The numeral employed indicates the last figure or figures of the year of issue.

To go into all the varieties of the Edwardian and Georgian controls would need more space than I have at my disposal. An idea of the range and importance of the subject may be gathered from the fact that the British controls as now listed for the first time in Messrs. Stanley Gibbons' catalogue run to no fewer than 154 items, varying in catalogue valuation from 4*d.* to 10*s.* I speak now only of those items to which catalogue prices have been assigned. There are others, unpriced, such as the earlier Victorians, which would be appraised at considerably higher rates.

The ideal way to collect "controls," as I have suggested already, is in blocks of six stamps, with marginal control attached. This, however, is likely to prove a too expensive plan so far as the older issues are concerned. In some cases the collector will be grateful enough if he secures the coveted control attached to a single specimen; and even in the case of current stamps many collectors are cutting down the block of six to a strip of three, on the ground that the larger blocks mean the locking up of too much capital, especially now that the stamps up to one shilling face value are supplied with controls.

Postage Stamp Portraits

The Dominican Republic

Santo Domingo—in other words the Dominican Republic—is the ancient "Hispaniola" of Bartolomeo Columbus, who founded there a Spanish settlement in 1496—the oldest settlement of European origin in the Western Hemisphere.

The Republic of Dominica, as I suppose I need hardly inform the learned geographers who read THE CAPTAIN, is the eastern portion of the island of San Domingo, while Haiti occupies the western section. Thereby hangs a stamp story. In 1900 the Dominican Republic issued a series of "map" stamps purporting to give a correct plan of the island. But the genius who got out that map must have used different ends of the telescope with which to view the two republics, for he gave Dominica a far greater share of superficial area than her boundaries entitle her to. When it is stated that the area of Santo Domingo is 18,750 square miles and the area of Haiti 10,200 square miles, a glance at the Dominican map stamp, illustrated on this page, will show that the line of demarcation was certainly not fairly placed. Haiti, in fact, had every right to feel aggrieved, and the story goes that the two republics almost went to war about it!

The 1900 "map" issue of the Dominican Republic.

The Dominican Republic has given us but one set of portrait stamps—the issue of February, 1902, brought out to commemorate the founding of the republic.

Here, on the values 1c. to 20c., we see portraits of Sanchez, Duarte, and Mella, three men whose names are prominent in Dominican history. The highest value of the set, the 50c., has no portrait, but a view of the ancient Castle of Santo Domingo.

There are, by the way, specimens known of all these stamps except the 10c. with the centres inverted, but one would have a little more faith in these if they were occasionally encountered in used condition. Coming from a country like the Dominican Republic, one is apt to suspect that they are "errors" of the accidentally-for-the-purpose order!

NOTABLE NEW ISSUES

(News from CAPTAIN *readers abroad as to new issues, or changes in existing issues, of postage stamps, is always welcome.—* STAMP EDITOR.)

Stamps of the Dominican Republic, showing portraits of Sanchez, Duarte, and Mella.

ALBANIA'S new postage-due stamps are much overprinted affairs. Stamps of the old "quint" series, already surcharged in "para" and "grosh," are now further overprinted with the word, "Takse" to indicate their use for postage-due purposes.

BOLIVIA.—Some new stamps are reported, at the moment of writing, to have come to hand from this South American Republic. The following are the values, colours, and designs:—

1 centavo,	green	(Ruins of Tiahuanacu).
2 centavos,	red	(Temple of ,,).
4 ,,	olive-brown	(Ruins of ,,).
10 ,,	violet	(Indian Sailing-boat).
20 ,,	chrome-yel.	(Rowing-boat).
1 boliviano,	carmine	(Picture of an Indian god).

CUBA is to have postage-due stamps, three of which should have been issued by the time this number of THE CAPTAIN is published. The stamps are in red for all values, and the design chosen is almost identical with that of the United States postage dues, the predominating feature being a large numeral. The inscriptions read "Republica de Cuba" and "Tasa por Corbar."

ITALY.—Particulars have now been published of the forthcoming parcel-post stamps. There are to be eight values: 5 centisimi, brown; 10c., blue; 25c., red; 50c., orange; 1 lira, violet; 2 lire, green; 3 lire, yellow; and 4 lire, grey.

LUXEMBURG now has postage stamps bearing the head of the Duchy's fair young ruler, the Grand Duchess Marie Adelaide. Five stamps of the face value of 5, 10, 12½, 15, and 25 centimes have made their appearance, and others, completing the series from 1c. to 5fr., are expected at an early date.

SALVADOR.—From America comes this description of a new set of Salvadorean stamps which are said to be more extraordinary than anything Nicaragua has ever achieved.

The stamps are of large size, the outer frame line being 24 by 29 millimetres. The paper used is ordinary white wove, but in order to give tinted background to prevent counterfeiting (?) the words "correos del salvador" (none of the words having capital letters!) are printed vertically reading upwards seven times on each stamp. The body of the stamp is type-set, with plain single rule border, the stamp being an upright oblong. The inscriptions read thus: "Correos—El Salvador—Franqueo—Oficial—Dos—2 Centavos." The "Franqueo Oficial" is an oval, the familiar form used on most of the official sets from 1896 onwards. Ordinary type marks, stars, daggers, double daggers, and section marks are printed at either end of "Correos" and the value in words, except that on the 3c. value type-ornaments take the place of the printers' marks. The figures of value are printed at right and left of the "Franqueo Oficial" character, except on the 100c. value, where they are replaced by stars, the figures being repeated twice in the next line, and omitted from the last line.

The stamps are perforated 12, and are of the following values and colours:—

2c., brown, black and green.
5c., yellow, black and green.
[illegible], purple, black and green.
[illegible], red, black and green.
[illegible], green, black and green.
17c., blue, black and green.
50c., dark brown, black and green.
100c., lilac, black and brown.

THE WAR AND PHILATELY

THE war is naturally directing collectors' special attention to the issues of the countries particularly concerned: Austria, Belgium, France, Great Britain, Germany, Luxemburg, Montenegro, Russia, and Servia. It has also led to a revival of interest in war stamps generally, and particularly such historic issues as the stamps of Alsace-Lorraine, created by the victorious Germans in the Franco-Prussian war. Almost every country of importance has issued war stamps of one sort or another except Great Britain. I wonder whether even Great Britain will join the procession now! If not, it will not be for want of suggestions, for various propositions for the issue of special stamps in aid of the Prince of Wales's Relief Fund are being advanced.

When Broken Feather Proved Himself a Man

By E. RUSSELL GREGOR Illustrated by L. R. Brightwell

THE sun was far down near the tops of the pines when Broken Feather took his blanket and left the Chippewa village to make his appeal to the Great Mystery. As was the custom, he went alone and without weapons. He followed a winding trail to the summit of a great mountain behind the camp, and when he reached the top he began the long, solitary vigil which would last until sunrise. It was a necessary part of his education, for he was about to become a warrior. On the following day he would depart into the wilderness to find and kill a bear. The feat was one of the accepted tests of manhood, and the time had come when Broken Feather must prove himself a man.

The autumn was far spent, and the night was made cold by a piercing north-west gale. It roared through the valleys and swept across the mountain-tops, and the wilderness trembled before its fury. A great blanket of clouds swept across the sky, and the earth was smothered in darkness. It seemed as if the elements had conspired to strike terror to the heart of the young Chippewa, who sat huddled in his blanket on the bleak summit of the mountain.

But Broken Feather was not afraid, for he knew that somewhere above that great sea of scudding clouds the Great Mystery was watching him and listening to his prayer. The knowledge gave him strength, and he scorned the fury of the gale and steeled his heart against the biting cold. He prayed for success in the hunt and for strength and courage to prove himself a man in the eyes of his people. He continued his supplications throughout the night, and at dawn he had a vision. A great hunting eagle circled three times about his head and then flew away into the north. Broken Feather's heart was filled with hope at the omen. He believed that the vision was good, that his medicine had been made strong and that he would be successful. He rose and stretched his arms towards the rising sun, then he descended to the village.

After he had partaken of food he entered his father's wigwam and received several pairs of moccasins from his mother, and a new bow and a quiver of selected arrows from his father. Then he bade them farewell and started on his journey. The people had gathered to see him depart, and when he turned towards the north they marvelled, for they invariably hunted towards the west. Several noted hunters called after him, and cautioned him to change his course. But the lad shook his head and continued northwards.

"Let him go, he will learn," said his father.

"The lad has had a vision, it is good," declared the old men, shaking their heads.

"He is going into the country of wolves, and I shall see no more of him," wailed his mother.

For two days Broken Feather travelled towards the north, and then at the edge of a large swamp he found evidences of the animal he sought. A great log had been ripped in pieces, and all about it were huge paw-prints which could have been made by nothing except a bear. But the young hunter was experienced enough to know that the signs were many days old. He searched carefully through the swamp for fresh tracks, but found nothing except a few mutilated logs and some paw-prints which were half filled with pine needles. As he came to the end of the swamp he saw a shadow at his feet. Looking up he again beheld the hunting eagle. He raised his bow and called a greeting, and the great bird screamed and flew away towards the north. Broken Feather hurried after it, for he believed that his medicine would bring him to his quarry.

That night he camped beside a little stream in a timbered ravine between two great mountain ranges. He had killed some squirrels earlier in the day, and he roasted them on willow twigs before the glowing embers of his fire. Broken Feather was farther from the Chippewa village than he had ever been before, and he began to feel like a real warrior. He

threw some dry wood upon his fire, and as it blazed he rose and danced about the flames, singing the Chippewa war song.

Suddenly a weird, melancholy sound came from the darkness, and Broken Feather stopped his dance to listen. For some moments he heard nothing but the crackle of his fire and the whispering of the great pines above him. Then the cry was repeated, and his heart bounded at the sound. It was far away and indistinct, but the lad recognised it as the same cry he had heard about the Chippewa village on cold winter nights. It was a cry which made the children run to their mother's arms, while the old men stirred the fire and shook their heads warningly. Now for the first time he heard it outside the protection of the village.

As the quavering call came through the darkness it sounded sinister and threatening, and Broken Feather shuddered in spite of himself. He identified it as the hunting cry of the wolf pack, and he wondered if they had found his trail. He had heard many tales of the ferocity of these gaunt grey brutes, and how they had torn to pieces and devoured several noted Chippewa hunters who had been foolish enough to venture alone into their country. For a moment Broken Feather wished himself back in the Chippewa village.

At the thought his heart filled with anger, and he rose and sent his war cry ringing through the night. As it echoed between the mountains he realised his imprudence. There might be enemies other than the wolves within hearing, and if there were he had foolishly proclaimed his whereabouts. He piled a supply of fuel beside his fire, and sat down to wait for the wolves. But they failed to appear, and the tired young hunter finally drew his blanket closely about him and went to sleep.

The following day he continued towards the north, and wherever he saw the hillsides covered with berry bushes he turned aside to hunt for a bear. Several times he found tracks, but they always seemed to be several days old, and Broken Feather became discouraged. He began to fear that the bears had gone to their dens for the winter.

At twilight he came to a little pond, and as he stole cautiously to the water's edge he saw two deer drinking, a short distance away. As he was in need of meat Broken Feather determined to stalk them. He began a stealthy approach through the bushes. There was no wind to betray him, and the deer seemed unconscious of danger. They were beautiful creatures: a splendid five-pronged buck and a sleek blue-coated doe. Having quenched their thirst, they were pulling lily roots from the bottom of the little lake. Then the doe suddenly turned her head and thrust her great ears forward, and the Chippewa stood as motionless as the pine beside him. The buck walked around her and raised his sensitive muzzle into the air to catch the danger scent. He was a splendid target, and Broken Feather released an arrow. It struck behind the shoulder, and the buck made several gigantic leaps after the doe, and then collapsed.

As he was skinning the deer Broken Feather saw fresh bear signs about the border of the lake. They were even larger than those he had found in the swamp, and his heart filled with hope. He believed that a monster bear lived somewhere within a short distance of the little pond. That it came daily to the water was evident from the number of tracks about the shores. The Chippewa felt sure the bear would visit the carcass of the deer he had just killed, and he determined to watch. He took his stand in some low bushes within easy range of the bait and waited anxiously for the bear to appear.

As he watched, the moon rose, and one by one the nearer objects were thrown into bold relief. A silver trail stretched itself slowly across the water, and along it swam a muskat. A fox yapped from the opposite shore, and a flock of belated geese flew noisily overhead. But there was no sound to betoken the approach of the bear, and Broken Feather became impatient.

Then the stillness was broken by the cry of the wolf pack. They were nearer than they had been the night before. Broken Feather glanced uneasily at the bait. He realised that if they once caught the scent of blood they would follow it to its source. For the time he forgot about the bear in his concern about the wolves. Each time the cry rang through the wilderness they seemed to be nearer. But the wild babel ended as suddenly as it began. The Chippewa was suspicious of the stillness. He wondered if the wolves were stealing quietly upon the bait. A twig snapped, and Broken Feather hastily fitted an arrow to his bow. He strained his eyes in an endeavour to find skulking forms at the edge of the shadows, but he saw nothing to arouse his suspicions. He continued to watch throughout the night, but heard nothing more of the wolf pack, and he saw nothing of the bear.

By the time dawn came Broken Feather was

sleepy and heavy-eyed. He was also discouraged, for it seemed as if this bear, like the others, had gone to its winter den. He was about to leave his hiding-place, when he heard the breaking of brush near at hand, and he crouched in the bushes. The sound continued, and the Chippewa began to tremble with excitement, for he knew that the bear was approaching.

Shortly afterwards it appeared in the open, and Broken Feather gasped in astonishment at its size. It was larger than any bear he had ever seen brought into the Chippewa village, and some of them were monsters. The bear had caught sight of the bait, and it turned and walked slowly forward to investigate it. It presented a splendid mark to the eager lad, for one whole side of its great body was exposed to his aim. But for a moment Broken Feather hesitated. He realised that it would take more than one arrow to kill such a giant, and he dreaded to think of the fate that awaited him should he fail to stop it before it reached him. He knew now why the Chippewas were satisfied with such a test of manhood. But he determined to prove his courage, and he fitted an arrow, and pulled back the bow string.

As the burning shaft tore into its side, the bear whirled about with a savage roar, and broke the projecting willow shaft with its teeth. Then it stood and roared in helpless rage, waiting for a sight of its unseen assailant. As it stood there another arrow ploughed its way into its shoulder. The bear again snapped off the willow shaft, and in its rage it began to maul the deer. Then an arrow found the vital spot behind the shoulder, and the monster went to its knees at the shock. Flushed with success, Broken Feather sounded his war cry and ran recklessly from cover.

At sight of him the bear rose to its feet and charged. The inexperienced young Chippewa was taken entirely by surprise, and he barely had time to release a random arrow before the bear was upon him. It rose upon its hind legs to crush him, but the agile young hunter sent an arrow deep into the great hairy breast and jumped nimbly aside. Beside itself with rage and pain the bear again charged him. Broken Feather dodged behind a tree, and as the bear rushed towards his cover three more arrows entered its body. It turned to snap at them, but its strength suddenly failed, and it fell upon its side gasping and coughing. The Chippewa waited until it had ceased to struggle, and then he approached cautiously. Finding it dead he began to sing and dance about its body, for he had accomplished the feat which made him a warrior.

When he had carefully removed the coarse, shaggy pelt, and had strung the great claws on a thong of buckskin and fastened them about his neck, Broken Feather cooked and ate the heart of his victim. It was a custom of his people, and they believed it ensured them the courage and strength of their savage antagonist. Then, having completed all the ceremonies of a successful hunter, Broken Feather set out on his return journey. But before he had gone far he heard a scream high above his head. Looking into the sky he beheld a great eagle circling above the bear. The superstitious young Chippewa returned to the scene of his combat, and held up a large piece of meat as a thank offering to the hunting eagle of his people. Then he resumed his journey.

Broken Feather was anxious to reach his people and exhibit the evidence of his prowess, and he did not stop until it was dark. As he was cooking his evening meal he again heard the wolf pack, and there was something in the cry that caused him concern. He rose and hurriedly gathered a supply of dry wood. Then he sat close beside his fire and listened. This time his fears were confirmed, for the sound was steadily growing louder and more distinct, and he knew that the pack was approaching. An instant later he realised the truth—the wolves had found his trail. Each moment their eager, excited yelps sounded nearer. The dreaded encounter was at hand, and the young Chippewa nerved himself for the fight. He fed his fire until the flames threw a great circle of light about him. Then he waited calmly for his savage pursuers to appear.

It was not long before they came. He heard them howling on all sides of him, and he knew that he was surrounded. They dared not enter the glaring circle of firelight, but he caught momentary glimpses of them at the edge of the darkness. Finally one great gaunt wolf, more courageous or more hungry than its fellows, rushed forward into the light. The Chippewa pierced it with an arrow, and it fell writhing within arm's reach of him. Several of its companions imitated its reckless example, and they, too, fell before the skilful aim of the determined young warrior. Then they slunk away into the shadows, and Broken Feather took the opportunity to drag more fuel to his fire. He knew that as long as it burned briskly there was little danger of the wolves reaching him, but he had gathered all the available

fuel within reach, and when it was gone he would have to expose himself to get more.

For a long time the wolves were silent, and the Chippewa hoped that they had gone. But at that instant he heard a savage snarl directly behind him, and he turned just in time to see a great grey form bound towards him. There was no time to release an arrow, and Broken Feather drew his knife and struck as the wolf bore him to the ground. The blow was a mortal one, and the wolf fell dead beside him. Then Broken Feather rose to his knees, and sent a continuous stream of arrows into the charging pack. Encouraged by the valour of their comrades, the had rushed in force, and it was only because of the Chippewa's splendid marksmanship that they had failed to tear him in pieces. When he had driven them off he replenished the fire.

Broken Feather fought fiercely, as the wolves, growing bolder, advanced from all sides.

The fire was his only refuge, and he noted with alarm that most of his fuel had been burned. He looked anxiously about him for more, but there was none within the narrowing circle of firelight. His heart sank, for he knew that to venture into the shadows meant instant death. He hoarded his scanty supply, but he soon threw the last stick on the dying

fire. The circle of light contracted, and the wolves drew nearer. He saw them on all sides of him. Daylight was a long way off, and before it came the fire would be but a bed of glowing embers. The lad suddenly realised the seriousness of his predicament, and for an instant fear overcame him. But the next moment the hot fighting blood of his people drove it from his heart. He rose and shook his weapons at the skulking grey forms and taunted them for their cowardice. He promised to show them how a Chippewa could fight, and he challenged the whole company to mortal combat. He reminded them that he carried the scalp of one greater than they, and threatened to annihilate the entire band. Then, realising that such idle talk could gain him nothing, he sat down and subsided into gloomy silence.

As the fire failed the wolves grew bolder. They exposed themselves recklessly in the firelight, but Broken Feather prudently withheld his arrows. He believed he would have urgent need of them later.

Then as he made no resistance the wolves rushed upon him. He slew the foremost ones with his arrows, but others came up behind him, and he soon found himself in a desperate struggle for his life. One great brute sank its fangs deep in his leg, but before it could pull him down he killed it with a powerful sweep of his knife. Broken Feather seemed to gain strength from his peril, and he fought with the fury of despair. After the first savage encounter the wolves became more cautious, for they found him a dangerous antagonist. At last one of them jumped and threw the Chippewa to the ground. But even at such a disadvantage the lad fought like a young panther. Before the savage beast could fasten a death grip on his throat, he forced his arm between the snapping jaws, and held it at bay until he dispatched it with a knife-thrust through the heart. An instant later he was upon his feet fighting as furiously as before. They gave way before him, and he followed them into the darkness. He gathered an armful of wood and retreated to the fire. Then, as the flames leaped up, the wolves withdrew into the night, and the Chippewa began to dance round the fire in celebration of his victory. He took no heed of his wounds, for his heart was filled with pride, and he scorned to acknowledge pain.

Two days later he limped into the Chippewa village chanting the song of victory. As the people gathered about him he unrolled the great bear skin, and took from it nine large wolf pelts. That night, at the council fire, he told of his great fight with the wolves; and the people murmured their approval of his bravery. Then after he had been proclaimed a warrior he walked proudly to his father's wigwam that his mother might dress his wounds.

THE END

PRIZES FOR POEMS ON "OUR FLEET"

AN INTERESTING AND TOPICAL COMPETITION FOR CAPTAINITES

A LARGE harvest of verse has already been brought forth by the historic events now happening in our midst. Doubtless many Captainites will be likewise inspired to poetic efforts, and we offer the prizes named below for the best original poems, not more than sixteen lines in length, received from our readers on the subject of "Our Fleet."

FIRST PRIZE IN EACH CLASS:
Goods to the Value of Half a Guinea

SECOND PRIZE IN EACH CLASS:
A Book by a "Captain" Author

AND TWENTY CONSOLATION PRIZES

Rules and Conditions

(1) The name, address, and age of the competitor must be written above the poem he submits.

(2) Each attempt must be original. No coupon is required for this competition.

(3) Competitors will be divided into two classes, comprising those sixteen years of age and over, and those under sixteen respectively.

(4) Entries must be received not later than October 20th, addressed "Poems," the Competition Editor, THE CAPTAIN, 8, Southampton Street, Strand, London, W.C.

(5) The Editor, whose decision must be accepted as final, reserves the right to publish any attempt submitted.

A COSSACK CHARGE

Specially drawn for THE CAPTAIN *by Stanley L. Wood.*

Russia can muster about two million Cossacks in time of war. These warriors pay no taxes, but render martial service instead, chiefly in defence of the frontiers. They are of slighter build than the average Russian, but are exceedingly hardy and courageous, and can travel great distances, day after day.

HOT WATER

By RICHARD BIRD

"Pass!" shouted Smithers, and the bottle whirled across the dormitory.

TWENTY minutes was the allotted time between house prayers and lights out, and this was more than enough for earnest-minded juniors to undress, say their prayers, and do any dumb-bell or deep-breathing exercises that must inevitably transform the weakling into a muscle-bulger within a week or so. Judiciously used, the twenty minutes allowed a margin for quiet horse-play between the visitations of the house master. This night there was an even ampler margin, for it was the first night of the Christmas term, when the holidays were so recent as to evoke solemn regrets. Dipcote in bulk retired quietly to the dormitories.

There was a little chastened chatting between older hands; the new arrivals, who perchance feared horrors at the hands of mythical bullies, for the most part were silent. By twenty-five to ten all the inhabitants of B dormitory of Castle's House were in pyjamas. Tarleton, new, slightly shy, but full of indomitable determination to make the best of things, buttoned the final button of his pyjama jacket, and turned to the occupier of the next bed.

"I say," he observed, with becoming reverence for an old inhabitant, "can you tell me where one gets hot water?"

The other, a fag named Charlbury, stared.

"What for—to wash?"

"No," said Tarleton. "Just some hot water—that's all."

"Never heard of anyone getting hot water at this time," said Charlbury; "but you might try the mut—the matron, you know. Go down the passage, and knock on the fourth door on the right."

"Thanks," said Tarleton; "I will."

He then stooped down and opened his box.

From it he took a rubber article, while Charlbury watched with protruding eyes

"Golly!" said Charlbury. "What's that?"

"My hot-water bottle," said Tarleton, gravely, and left the room.

He found the matron's abode easily, and proffered his request. The matron smiled, a little perplexed but sympathetic.

"I've never heard of a hot-water bottle in Dipcote," she said, "except for sickness. You're not sick, are you?"

"No," said Tarleton; "but I get beastly cold feet at night, and I always have one. It's not against the rules, is it?"

"No, Master Tarleton. But—but I should think the other boys would make fun. It might be better not to——"

"If it's not against the rules," said the stout-hearted Tarleton, "I should like to have it. So long as I can keep my feet warm, I don't care what they say."

The matron liked his pluck, and pointed to the fire.

"There's always a kettle on there at night," she said. "You can fill it for yourself after prayers."

"Thanks very much," said Tarleton, and obeyed.

He returned in triumph to the dorm, hugging the comforter to his bosom. What he had said was really true; so long as he could keep his feet warm he did not care.

A deathlike silence awaited him. The light was still burning, and some of the dorm were trying to get to sleep. Not so Charlbury; this was too good a thing to miss in sleep. As Tarleton sat down on his bed he asked in silky tones if that was a new patent. Tarleton said, "No." Charlbury then begged to be allowed a closer inspection.

"Jolly cute dodge," he said, in honeyed accents. "Wish I'd thought of bringing one. The sheets are beastly cold to climb into. May I have a squint?"

Tarleton handed over the rubber bottle. The next moment Charlbury stood up on his bed.

"Hi! Jackson!" he said, in a shrill whisper. "Line out of touch!"

Jackson, a fag of fifteen years, arose likewise, and the hot bottle was slung across the room. The dormitory sat up and took notice. "Pass! *Pass!*" said Smithers, in a supplicating whine. The bottle flew across (Dipcote played Rugger, you may remember), and was handled with unerring skill.

"I say, *when* you've done with it!" said Tarleton, good-temperedly anxious. "You'll bust the thing!"

"Pass! *Pass!*" came from more than one of the beds, and in another minute a magnificent demonstration of the handling code, as the papers say, was in progress.

Roused by the disregarding of his appeals, and really alarmed for the safety of his precious bottle, Tarleton sprang up and dashed from bed to bed in the vain pursuit of the flying substitute for a ball.

It was a gift from the gods to dispel the gloom of a new term's first night. Pyjama-clad forms seemed to arise in clouds, even new boys taking courage and the ball in both hands. "Pass—*pass!*" "Fling it out!" "Chuck it about!" "*Pass*, Dipcote!" "Pass out to your wing, Smithers!" "Don't mull it!" "Pass! *Pass!*"

The whispers became louder as the bottle whirled. More frantic grew Tarleton as he leapt from bed to bed, or ran wildly down the mat-strewn lanes between. "Pass! *Pass!*" The bottle was whirling through the air when the door opened. The junior house master came in and "the tumult and the shouting died." The older hands breathed relief. Thank goodness it wasn't Castle! Greaves was a decent sort. Greaves was more than a decent sort, for if he had not been alert and a Rugger player himself, the flying bottle would have taken him well in the wind. As it was he accepted the unwitting pass and stood still while the shame-faced players collapsed beneath the blankets.

"Too much noise for the first night," he said, quietly. "Who owns this—er—this?"

He held up the bottle, suppressing a smile.

"I do, sir," said Tarleton, regaining composure. "I get cold feet, and—and have always used one."

"Well, keep tighter hold of it in future," said Greaves, returning it to the overjoyed owner, "or you'll be getting into trouble. This light ought to be out. Ready?" He extinguished the gas. "G'night."

"Good night, sir," and peace reigned for the time being.

* * * * *

When it became known that a new member of Castle's actually indulged in a hot-water bottle at night there was a fever of unrest. Such a thing had never been heard of before, and Tarleton's effeminacy was unsparingly condemned. The prefects and older fellows of the house took no notice; they guessed, sagely, it would not be long before the innovation would be a thing of the past: public opinion and the

arts of the Lower Study must inevitably compel Tarleton to lead a more Spartan existence. Greaves chuckled in private to Castle, and took the same view.

"No need to forbid it, eh?" he said. "The thing will cure itself, or I'm much mistaken." He was much mistaken, for Tarleton, though new, was a stubborn soul. He clung to his bottle with determined obstinacy, not from a silly desire to oppose society unreasonably, but for the sane reason that his feet *did* get cold, and cold feet make it much harder to get to sleep. In all other respects he was the usual hardy youngster. He played footer pluckily, and took his morning cold tub, whatever the temperature, without a qualm. But in the matter of the bottle he was adamant. His nickname of "Colders" moved him not at all. Some nickname, he knew, he was bound to get, and he was glad it was no worse.

But the rest of dormitory B found a new zest in life, a new interest. Bullying was not the thing at Dipcote, and, if it had been, Messrs. Jackson, Charlbury, Smithers and Co. were far too genial to employ tyrannical methods. Besides, he was a "new kid," and therefore to be given a little extra rope. But this departure from stern tradition could not lightly be overlooked. It was incumbent on every right-minded person to "dissuade" Tarleton from his unfortunate weakness. A system of peaceful picketing was tried, and proved useless. Tarleton listened patiently to all arguments appealing to a sense of decency, the heroic temper for which dorm B (they said) was proverbial, the disgracefulness of coddling, and the like. To all such appeals he listened in silence, and ever the answer was the same: "But you chaps don't understand how cold my feet get at night."

After days of patient argument, direct action was resolved on by a committee of three. The committee met over the Lower Study fire, when brewing after a football game. It was Jackson who made the suggestion.

"I say, Chollie, have you brought back your tame hedgehog this term?"

"Yes," said Charlbury, guardedly, "but I'm not going to lend it you again. The poor beast's tongue never looked the same after you'd tried to poison it with red ink."

"I didn't try to poison it. The brute lapped it up when I was doing a prose and not looking. It wasn't my fault."

"No; and it wasn't your desk it was sick in," said Charlbury, pointedly. "My hedgehog has retired from business."

"I only wanted you to stick it in Colders' bed to-night," said Jackson, pacifically. "Smuggle it in instead of the hot-bottle when he's not looking. It wouldn't hurt the beastly thing."

"How'd you get it in?" asked Charlbury, suspiciously. "He's bound to spot it."

"Not necessarily. We could watch our chance. Get some of the other chaps to talk to him—show him some foreign stamps to swop, or something. While he's busy over at the gas, you could do the trick easily—your bed's the next one."

Charlbury pondered. The idea was tempting.

"Well," he said, "it might be done. It would need careful handling, and I'm shot if I let you lay a finger on Sambo again."

"I wouldn't touch him with a barge-pole," said Jackson, loftily. "If you'll put Sambo to bed, I bet I can keep Colders from noticing."

But, as it proved, no diplomacy was necessary. Tarleton went to the mut's room that night as usual, and filled his bottle. He returned unscathed, and put the bottle into his bed. Just as Jackson was going to begin operations Mr. Castle came into the room.

"Tarleton," he said, "you left your boots lying about in the changing-room. Put on your dressing-gown, go downstairs, and put them away—sharp!"

Tarleton obeyed while the conspirators hugged themselves. When he returned, he gave a suspicious glance at his bed. Yes—it was all right. There was the comforting hump beneath the counterpane, the hump that promised warmth and speedy sleep. Charlbury—the head of the dorm until the prefect came up later—hopped out of bed. "Time the gas was out, you chaps!" he said. Without waiting for possible protests or beggings for "half a sec!" he turned it out. A moment later Tarleton climbed into bed, and——

"*E—e—e—hhhhh!*" he yelped, as his toes met Sambo for an anguished, split second. Then there was silence. Tarleton had a good nerve, and had been brought up in the country. The dorm waited in palpitating happiness for events.

In the darkness Tarleton uncovered the bed, and felt cautiously. Yes, it was undoubtedly a hedgehog, and he knew what to do. He took his shirt, raised Sambo gingerly, and stole cautiously towards the window, which was open. Then he spoke with quick decision.

"If somebody doesn't put my bottle back at once I'll drop this brute!"

"You cad!" said Charlbury, springing up to save his pet. "Here—give it me!"

"If that bottle isn't in my bed before I count ten," said Tarleton, "this beast *goes!*"

"All right! All right! I swear I'll put it back! Don't be in a hurry——"

"Six—seven—eight——"

"Wait! Wait! Here it is! It's back, old chap—it's *back!*"

"Sure? Nine——"

"Quite sure—I swear it!"

Tarleton walked back and made sure.

"Here's your hedgehog!" he said, contemptuously, and dropped it on Chollie's bare foot. "*Ooock!*" said Charlbury, explosively. The callous dormitory laughed, and, as Tarleton was as big as his tormentor, Chollie had to content himself with muttered threats as he penned the hedgehog in his box for the night. The first encounter was clearly a drawn game.

But, obviously, there had to be a return match. By dint of a persuasive tongue Chollie succeeded in keeping up the feeling that Tarleton should be cured of his reprehensible weakness. Three nights later, when Tarleton came upstairs, he found that his compeers had anticipated him. Jackson had possession of the bottle, and surveyed him with a bland smile. The rest of the dorm stood round in a grinning mob.

"I'll fill your bottle for you to-night, Colders," said Jackson. "You go to bed like a good boy, and don't worry."

"You needn't bother," said Tarleton, with justifiable suspicion; "I can manage that all right by myself."

"No trouble at all," Jackson assured him. "It's a pleasure, old man, to do something for you."

"Here! Give that to me!" said Tarleton, making efforts to reach the kindly helper. The ring closed round him, and in the subsequent *mêlée* Jackson escaped—ostensibly bound for the matron's room. He went, instead, to the bath-room, and presently returned.

"Your bottle's full," he said, with perfect truth. "Now, climb into bed, and don't worry."

"You give it me!" repeated Tarleton, glumly regarding the enemy. One against seven is too great odds; there are times when temporary defeat must be accepted.

"I'll give it you the moment the gas is out," returned Jackson. "But don't worry—you can see the beggar bulge. I couldn't get any more water in."

Tarleton took refuge in silence, wondering what the new game might be. He was soon enlightened. When he received the bottle, it was indeed full, as Jackson had averred. But the fluid it contained was cold water, and it was too late to go to the mut for a fresh supply.

Thereafter, Tarleton was more careful. Instead of keeping his bottle hung on the bed knob, as had been his custom hitherto, he locked it in his box after emptying it in the morning. For a whole three weeks he slept warm and cosy, untroubled by villainous designs. Then, through forgetfulness—he was almost late that morning and arrived at breakfast panting with his collar undone—he left it in his bed. The maid hung it up. As ill-luck would have it, Smithers obtained leave to get a clean handkerchief that very afternoon. He went up to the dorm whistling, care-free, idle. When he reached the room he noticed the bottle. Smithers smiled largely. Verily, Tarleton was asking for it, and it must be put across him with the least possible delay. Hiding the bottle under his coat, Smithers put it in his locker downstairs till afternoon school was over. Three periods (verses, arithmetic, and composition) were devoted to the finding of a plan. By means of surreptitious notes Messrs. Jackson and Charlbury were enlisted in the good work, and when they met after the last bell had rung it was felt that their labour had not been wasted. The credit was shared. Smithers had provided the bottle, Jackson the plan, Charlbury (during last period when he got leave out and used it to rush up to the san and corrupt the good faith of Nurse Hartley) the material. The triumvirate spent a busy twenty minutes before prep making ready. Then Jackson stole upstairs to ask the mut for "a cough-lozenge, please, matron." At that hour the dormitories were all open, but it was death to enter them without leave. Jackson risked that penalty, and was rewarded by the success he did not deserve. He hung the bottle up again on Tarleton's bed without being detected, and went back to the Lower Study.

At 9.25 Tarleton took down the bottle. He surveyed it with disgust, for it was obviously full. This was beginning to pall.

"It's a poor wheeze to try the same dodge twice," he said, with artistic disgust for mechanical repetition. "You chaps might have thought of something more original than cold water again."

"I haven't put a drop of water in," said Charlbury, with an injured air. "Have you Jackson?"

"Not me," said the virtuous and ungrammatical Jackson. "I wouldn't be seen dead with the thing. Have you, Smithers?"

"No," said Smithers, and all the dorm

with emphasis declared their innocence of cold water.

"These skivvys do interfere so," said Jackson, with a sage mournfulness. "Have any——"

"You *swabs!*" said Tarleton, investigating. He pulled something white and clinging from the bottle's interior. A short inspection convinced him that he would not be able to empty his bottle that night at any rate. It was packed to bursting with cotton wool.

* * * * *

But the indomitable will of Tarleton refused to be conquered. With a pathetic watchfulness he guarded his precious bottle. He never forgot again to lock it up in the morning, and he never missed another night that term in going down to the mut's room and filling it. It was exhausting work, this perpetual guardianship; but he felt that his pride, as well as his comfort, was at stake. He was rewarded by comfort and sleep and by the consciousness of triumph. For a time—for the rest of the term, in fact—his enemies let him alone. They had had some fun, and they were a little tired of the everlasting hunt for new schemes. It was not, be assured, a dislike for Colders that made them strive against him. As a personage, they liked him. Only, this unfortunate weakness was against all Castellian traditions, and it was a bad precedent to be conquered by a new kid.

But when the Easter term came round, and Tarleton returned, hopeful, happy, more sure of himself, but still accompanied by the faithful companion of his night watches, they felt roused to fresh efforts. This time a merry spark called Wimple produced the scheme. It was tried the third night of term.

About ten-fifteen Tarleton sprang from his bed with a cry. "*Glmps!*" he said, sharply. "Some beastly thing has bitten me! I'm going to light the gas!"

He did, risking detection, sure that his explanation would be accepted if a master or prefect came round. Holding his right foot up to the light, he saw a thin trickle of blood coming from his right toe.

"Gummy! I'm *bleeding!*" he said. "Can there be leeches in the bed?"

Full of amazed disgust, he stripped the bed and searched thoroughly. The comments from the rest of the dorm were unsympathetic and lacking in taste. Tarleton went back to bed, wondering what on earth could have happened. Wimple, hiding a thin cane with a needle lashed to the split end ("You must *boil* the needle first, or it might give him blood-poisoning!" had said the kindly Jackson), did not enlighten him. The scientific possibility that dirt might get into the possible wound and so produce blood-poisoning never occurred to these careless hearts. At 10.45 Wimple tried again.

Stealing cautiously forth, Wimple reached the foot of Tarleton's bed and gingerly raised the coverings. Then he gently—very gently—inserted his spear and prodded. This time he had better luck. He fleshed his weapon successfully three times upon the unprotesting bottle. Tarleton, warm and snug, did not wake—then.

He woke at 1.30. (This is official. The tremendous Wimple lay awake ALL the time, listening to the cathedral chimes.) Tarleton then became conscious of a soggy feeling, gradually ascending. He had been reading the "Apology" in English as a home-holiday task, and wondered if he had inadvertently drunk hemlock and was dying, even as Socrates. Becoming more awake, he realised that he was cold and damp. Awakening still more, he discovered that he was exceedingly damp, that his bed was exceedingly damp, and that the alleged "hot" bottle was flat.

"Oh, *help!*" said Tarleton, miserably.

* * * * *

But even that did not defeat him. He mended the punctures with a cycle repair outfit, and "explained" to the matron that "somehow" a leakage had occurred. He was a sportsman who did not tell tales. In recognition of this good spirit, the dorm passed a self-denying ordinance that Tarleton's hot bottle should be left alone. He thanked them briefly with a weary smile.

"I'll stick to that hot bottle for good!" he said. "And I hope you chaps see that I've come out on top."

Yet what violence failed to accomplish vanity succeeded in doing. Tarleton gave up his bottle of his own free will. The reason was this.

A fortnight or so later it happened to be February 14th. On that day Tarleton received a package by the first post at breakfast. He opened it, anticipating some unexpected gift. His anticipations were partly realised. A card lay inside, inscribed "A Valentine for a Cold Boy." With trembling fingers he unfastened the parcel. Before he had time to hide them an unfeeling neighbour, who was in the secret, dangled the contents aloft before the whole table. It was a pair of white bed-socks, daintily adorned with ribbons. The roar of laughter that greeted them was the undoing of Tarleton. From that time the hot bottle was discarded.

SOUTHAMPTON STREET, STRAND, LONDON

Never before has "The Captain" been produced when the whole of Europe was under arms; never before have I had to write the editorial amid the thunder of a great war, with the enemy of the world encamped but a little over a hundred miles from the room in which I write. And never before has a CAPTAIN quite so slender been placed in your hands; a CAPTAIN which has been gathered together, edited, printed, and published in circumstances which we shall vividly remember for the rest of our days.

I make no apologies for the fact that THE CAPTAIN is not so stout this month as usually it is its good fortune to be. I do not think for one moment that I shall lose a single reader because a few of its pages have been shed, for my readers are loyal and staunch, and they know full well that I would not drop a single line if it were not absolutely essential to do so. In the past I have always endeavoured to add to the volume of reading matter, and to give, whenever I could, special supplements and plates, always without altering the old familiar "*6d.*" on the cover. Now I have had to take a precisely opposite course for a short while—it may be, and I trust it will be, for this one month only—and I am obliged to reduce where previously I had expanded. Many of our friends the advertisers have been compelled temporarily to desert us, and so a score or more of pages which were all part and parcel of our magazine are unfortunately no longer filled with the announcements that many

Photo, H. Symonds.

Admiral Sir John R. Jellicoe, in supreme command of the British Fleet.

thousands of British fellows were accustomed to read with so much interest. From across the North Sea comes a great proportion of the raw material from which the paper on which THE CAPTAIN is printed is made, and the consequent difficulty in obtaining this made it absolutely imperative that we should withdraw the pages usually filled with advertisements altogether, and take as little as possible away from the pages of reading matter. Though this number may at first touch feel a trifle thin to you, you will find there is almost as much literary fare in it as usual, one article and one story perhaps representing the difference. There are still five complete stories in this number, beside long instalments of two great new serials and several articles, and considering the quality of them all I do not imagine there will be many of you who will think this number a poor exchange for his sixpence. I hope that before the time for going to press with our next issue arrives good news will have come through that will enable me to return to the usual order of things.

A French biplane, piloted by Lieut. Blard, passing over a battery of artillery. *Photo, Topical.*

To serve their King and Country.—No sooner had war been declared than there commenced a regular procession of old, familiar figures through my office door, and each of them had the same message to tell. One of the first to appear was John Mackie, who looked in on his way to the War Office to offer himself for active service wherever his country most might need him. John Mackie has served the Empire in almost every continent, but still the duty fever is strong within him, and his eye is as keen, and his arm as strong, and his heart as brave as ever. Once again, as he did at the time of the South African War, has John Mackie laid down the pen to take up the sword. Barely had I wished him "God speed!" than Captain G. A. Hope appeared, on the same mission. Captain Hope has been out of the Army for some time now, but he is a fighter born, and the chance of getting at close grips with the enemy was like meat and drink to him. I doubt not that the authorities have found good work for this Old Marlburian to do.

Then came a letter from Captain Gilson, saying that he, too, had placed himself at the disposal of Whitehall, and letters from Old Boy readers and secretaries of Captain clubs, telling that they had joined the Colours. That Britain will administer a thorough thrashing to the nation that craftily endeavoured to gain a strategical advantage by bullying Belgium, I am supremely confident; it is not a vain fight that is fought at honour's command; I feel proud that in the great deeds that will go to our ultimate victory so many of those that I and this magazine know so well will be playing a part. May they all return to us safe and sound, and—as I know that they all wish—may duty take them where the fight is thickest and heroes' laurels are to be won!

Photo, Cribb, Southsea.

H.M.S. *Iron Duke*, flagship of the Fleet, and H.M.S. *Marlborough*. At the stern of the latter, on the 13.5 gun turret, are seen the aero guns, pointing skywards.

If Captainites are all good Graphologists, the gentleman whose handwriting we reproduced two months ago must possess a remarkably conflicting set of characteristics. According to various discerning readers, he is "a swank," "modest and unassuming," "capable of great affection," "hard and unsympathetic," "highly musical," "has no ear for music," "has a good eye for beauty of form and colour," "is colour blind." Two or three readers professed to recognise the calligraphy of your humble servant; while others confidently declared the writer to belong to the fairer sex—"he is a lady," as one youthful competitor paradoxically expressed it. This competition, by the way, proved more than usually popular with girl Captainites, whose entries included some of the most accurate attempts we received. On the whole, the gentleman who thus allowed himself to be analysed and dissected has emerged as satisfactorily as we think he could expect; but should he walk into the office with haughty airs on that account, our readers have provided us with one or two damaging indictments that should reduce him to becoming humility. The prizes have been awarded to the following: —

CLASS I.—WINNER OF FIRST PRIZE (Goods to the value of One Guinea): DONALD HUME NODING, 16, Norfolk Road, Walthamstow.

WINNER OF SECOND PRIZE (Goods to the value of Half a Guinea): WINIFRED FIELDING, "The Gate," Greetland, near Halifax.

CLASS II.—WINNER OF FIRST PRIZE: H. D. MURRAY, Lightwood, Kenley, Surrey.

WINNER OF SECOND PRIZE: MURIEL STEELE, Felday, Marryat Road, Wimbledon.

CONSOLATION PRIZES: William Kerr, Ayr; G. Kennedy, Holyhead; Brian Tuite, Beneden; M. Nicholson, Gravesend; Annie Elliott, Cheltenham; Herbert Peacock, Cork; G. S. Lowdon, Leeds; H. L. Petavel, Stanford-le-Hope; Ernest Rapkins, London, E.C.; H. Strongtharm, Fulham; W. G. Painton, London; A. Warner, Stockport; Lester Page, Darby Dale; C. J. Bladworth, Reedness; C. Streeter, Putney; John Turner, London, S.W.; R. Waters, Norwich; Ena Stuart, Grimsby; D. Partridge, Normanton; R. G. Clayton, Skipton.

Answers to Correspondents

SCHOOL SPORTS RESULTS

CLEDBURY MORTIMER COLLEGE (Salop).—*Long Jump:* J. E. Caldwell, 17ft. 9ins. *High Jump:* E. Ridge, 4ft. 6ins. 100 *Yards:* J. E. Caldwell, 10⅕secs. *Half-mile* (handicap): R. L. Stewart. *Mile:* G. Hooper. *Throwing the Cricket Ball:* J. E. Caldwell, 99yds. 1ft. 5ins.

MOUNT ST. MARY'S COLLEGE (Chesterfield).—*Long Jump:* D. Mullally, 18ft. 7ins. *High Jump:* H. Leach, 5ft. 1½ins. 100 *Yards:* D. Mullally, 10⅖secs. (school record). *Quarter-mile:* D. Mullally, 54⅕secs. (school record). *Half-mile* (handicap): J. Standen. *Mile* (handicap): J. Kennedy. *Hurdles:* R. Salt, 18⅕secs.

GENERAL

Phiz II.—I have never seen "a Blackfoot on the warpath," so I don't know whether he wears the fancy waistcoat and the rather Scottish nether garment which he is given in your sketch. But you need a lot more practice and training in draughtsmanship before showing your work to editors.

W. G. R.—You will see that the articles have reappeared. We have always discontinued them during the summer to make room for more seasonable contributions.

"Great Western."—The paper you want is *Models*, edited by Henry Greenly, price 3*d.* monthly. It is issued by the Model Railway Press, 1, Neston Road, Watford, Herts.

I. H.—You have my sympathy, but I can only advise you to consult a reliable dentist.

P. E. (Huddersfield).—Sorry, but your drawing is too amateurish for publication.

J. R. Stafford.—Thanks for the photographs, but they are not quite clear enough to be reproduced well.

Curious.—No, sir, I am not. Who are you?

Cheltonian and Rossallian write in regard to "Marlburian's" belief, expressed in a recent number of THE CAPTAIN, that the Marlborough College O.T.C. had more certificate A holders than any other public school, their number being twenty-five. Cheltenham, I understand, had twenty-seven holders of the certificate during the past summer, while Rossall can boast of thirty-two. To both these schools I offer my congratulations. At the same time it must be pointed out that "Marlburian's" statement expressly referred to 1913, the article having been written before any figures relating to the present year were available.

THE OLD FAG

Clearing decks for action. *Photo, Cribb, Southsea.*

THE PERIL OF THE SKY

Drawn by] [*E. S. Hodgson.*

A British submarine, which has just risen to the surface, sinks again to avoid detection by a hostile aeroplane.

A shout of delight arose as Alfgar and his companions appeared, and a moment later each of the five was standing on a shield held aloft by brawny, battle-scarred arms.

FLAMEHAIR THE SKALD

A Story of the Days when the Norsemen Ruled the Seas

By H. BEDFORD JONES —◇— Illustrated by T. Heath Robinson

SYNOPSIS OF LAST MONTH'S INSTALMENT

ALFGAR, called Flamehair from his golden locks, is a young Saxon captured from England by a marauding band of Vikings, who themselves are subsequently beaten at sea by Harald Hardrede, of Norway, whose service Alfgar enters. He proves his worth by a remarkable feat of oar-walking, and also wins the favour of the Norsemen by his skill as a skald, or singer.

He learns that Harald, exiled from his own land, of which he is the rightful sovereign, has become the acolyth or chief of the Varangars, the royal bodyguard at Byzantium, most of whom are Norsemen, like Harald himself. The Empress wishes to marry Harald, and, as he refuses, lays a trap for him, and he and Alfgar are captured on the royal ship, whose commander has orders to take Harald to the summer palace.

In the night Alfgar escapes and swims to land, then announces to the Varangars—among whom he finds his uncle Eadgar—that their chief is a prisoner. At once the cry "To the Palace!" is raised, and many of the Norsemen prepare to assail the royal residence there and then.

CHAPTER V—(*Continued*)

"TO THE PALACE!"

THIS started the tumult anew, and Svein resolutely pushed his way to the door. Alfgar, standing by, realised how the men might easily endanger Harald's life. So, putting out his foot, he quietly tripped up the Viking and sent him sprawling. The others sent up a shout of laughter for all their rage, but Svein regained his feet and made for Alfgar.

Gripping his sword, the lad waited, but Ulf sprang between and seized Svein.

"Are you mad!" he roared. "This is no Viking ship! Harald would be killed before we could reach him; put up your sword, Svein, and hear reason."

"Yes, yes," cried others, "this is no time for brawling. Shame, to draw sword on a lad!"

Alfgar saw old Atli grin, but Svein, with a sullen glance at the young Saxon, withdrew growling. So the matter blew over, and Alfgar thought no more of it for the time.

Astounded and dismayed at the news, the chiefs gathered in consultation. Ascertaining that nothing would be done that night, at all events, Alfgar begged his uncle to give him a sleeping place, for, once the excitement was over, he was almost too weary to stand. Eadgar led him to his own room, and Alfgar flung himself down on a pile of skins.

While he slept, the quarters of the Varangars remained in a turmoil most of the night, as new men came in and heard the news. It needed but little to stir the Northmen to the boiling point, for it was only two days since various members of their families had been taken, no one knew whence. It was strongly suspected that the Empress had seized on them as hostages for the loyalty of the troops, and in the light of Harald's capture this was no longer doubted. At length, however, the chiefs decided that until they had further news from Harald nothing could be done, nor would they risk endangering the hostages.

It was late the next morning before Alfgar wakened from his sleep and found his uncle beside him. When he had eaten, the two talked long of England and all that had happened there since Eadgar's outlawry by Canute's cruel and weak son.

"Well, there is naught for us there," sighed the older warrior at last. "Our lands are gone, and you and I alone are left of the old stock, lad. We must carve out our fortunes here, and already I have made a fair start."

"But what about Harald?" Alfgar started

to his feet suddenly, remembering. "Have they done anything?"

"No," and Eadgar shook his head sadly. "Atli and Egil tell me you have some skill as a skald, Flamehair. Come out and sing to the men."

"I have no heart for singing," responded Alfgar, worried. "There is too much to be done."

"Nonsense," rejoined the other with a smile. "The men are dispirited and downcast, lad. Thiodolf the Skald has been making sad music all night, until Haldor sent him on duty to get rid of him. Come, hearten the men with a song of home-coming, nephew!"

Smiling, Alfgar yielded and followed his uncle out to the large room. Here the men were sitting in small groups. Some talked in low voices, others gambled moodily, while still others rubbed at their weapons or sat staring at the floor. There was discontent smouldering in the air, and just as they entered the room Ulf of Iceland was forcing a quarrelling Frank and Saxon apart.

The men greeted Alfgar kindly enough, but they seemed to have lost their high spirits of the night before. One, sitting with his head in his hands, did not even look up. Eadgar led the young Saxon to a raised dais where were a couch of wood and a small harp.

As the lad took up the instrument, one or two of the *Raven's* crew came forward and greeted him, spreading the word of his skill among the others. Alfgar tuned up the harp, wondering of what he would sing, when his uncle turned to him.

"Make it brisk and lively, Flamehair—sing of the sea and home!"

"Aye, sing of the sea and of home!" echoed the deep voice of Ulf, and as Alfgar struck a chord he smiled again at the red-bearded giant. Then the words came to him, and he broke into a swinging chant that brought the Vikings to their feet.

Home, home again, Varangar exiles! Strike oars in the deep!
Smite the broad seas with the oar of tough Tyrhewn ash!
Up, up over the sea-rim to Norway—our prows nearer leap
With each curling crest, with each onrushing foam-cap's sweep!
Hasten, hasten, ye waves! Ah, sweet to our ears is the crash
As the prow cleaves the sea, and sweet is the spume-cloud it flings!
Hoist sail, till the dragon throws foam like a steed from the lash;
Let the raven float free, bearing bane in the face of the day!
Out shields! Let the dragon scales sing us to sleep in their clash—
On, on till the Norway sun bids the sharp dragon-claws flash!
Home, home to the sweep and the upsurging swirl of the fray!

"Skoal to Flamehair the Skald! Skoal!"

A long howl of delight stormed through the hall, mingled with a great clash of weapons as Alfgar concluded, flushed with his own success. Round him crowded the men, begging for more, and he sang on until his fingers were tired. Suddenly the man who had been sitting with his head bowed in his hands leaped up with a wild shout.

"Death to the Empress! Blood and fire! Blood and fire!"

"Down, Hrolf!" roared Eadgar, tearing the bright sword from him. As Alfgar saw the man's haggard face and heard his name, he sprang forward suddenly.

"Is your name Hrolf?" he cried excitedly "Are you a Dane from England, and have you a daughter named Sigrid?"

Staring at him, dumb with surprise, Hrolf stood for a moment. Then he leaped forward and gripped Alfgar's shoulder in a clutch of iron.

"What of her?" he shouted hoarsely. "What know you of me, Saxon? Quickly!"

"I know where she is!" Not until that moment had Alfgar recalled the window in the wall. Suddenly it all burst on him, and as a roar pealed up through the hall Alfgar twisted free.

"Uncle! Ulf! Do you and Hrolf here come apart with me," he begged. At this the Varangars protested furiously, for many of them had friends or relatives among those taken for hostages, but the chiefs quieted them, and with Alfgar and Hrolf withdrew to the smaller room.

Here the young Saxon told his story in detail. During the telling a fierce light sprang into Hrolf's eyes and his lips gnawed at his long moustache, but he said no word. As Alfgar finished, Ulf laid his hand on the man's shoulder.

"Be patient, old friend! We must not let the rest know where the hostages are confined until we are ready to act. Then we can let loose a flood on Tsargrad that will make the Empress tremble on her throne!"

Hrolf nodded, and clasped the hand of Alfgar.

"I—I cannot thank you for this," he said,

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slowly, searching the lad's face. "Truly you have been sent to us, whether by Odin or by the White Christ I know not. When you need a friend, come to Hrolf Dagson."

And, with a nod of reassurance to the chiefs, he left the room. Ulf gazed at Eadgar silently.

"We must talk with Haldor," said the latter, quickly. "I will send for him."

"Will it be safe for me to go out?" asked Alfgar, while his uncle was gone. "Methinks I would be safe enough by daylight, with one or two of the men. Where is Atli Farseer?"

"The man of Raud the Red?" replied Ulf. "He has gone out, I know not where. As for you, it would be better than good for you to stay here, Flamehair. They may be searching for you even now. Ah, here is Haldor!"

The Iceland man, summoned from the near-by Palace, came in with Eadgar. Haldor was one of Harald's most faithful men, but his face was marred and broken from a wound received during a siege some time before. He was a man of few words, and heard Alfgar's news calmly.

"Then we know all that is necessary," he said. "Harald is somewhere in the summer palace of Blanchernae, and the hostages are in the palace of Princess Maria. What had we best do?"

A hasty knock came at the door, and in response to a nod from Ulf, Alfgar opened it to find Atli there.

"News!" cried the old Helmsman hastily, when he had entered. "I went abroad with Egil Thordson, and all morning we have been seeking. An hour since we ran across a Greek soldier in a wineshop. He was blabbing a trifle, and after we had finished with him he blabbed more. Egil is taking care of him so that he won't escape."

"But the news, man!" cried Eadgar, impatiently. "What is it?"

"Harald is in the prison of Constantine, at the south end of Blanchernae!"

"The prison of Constantine!" repeated Haldor. "That is nothing but gardens, eh, Ulf?"

"Gardens," assented Ulf," with a small summer-house in the centre. I was on guard there when the Emperor Michael Catalactus was killed. The outside walls are guarded, and the Greek troops and mercenaries are quartered close by."

"It would be a hard nut even for the Varangars to crack," said Eadgar gloomily, "even were it not for the hostages in the Empress's hands. I fear we can do nothing, comrades."

CHAPTER VI

HOW THE VARANGARS STRUCK

THERE was a long silence after that; Alfgar gazed from one to another, but read no encouragement in their faces. Ulf plucked at his beard nervously, Haldor fingered his sword and frowned, and Eadgar stared at the floor. Suddenly he looked up.

"By the way, Alfgar, you spoke of a man in a chariot who refused you help. What was he like?"

Alfgar briefly described the man as he remembered him. As he did so Eadgar looked black and the others muttered a curse.

"Did the chariot have little lions of ivory around the fore-tail, with gold bulwarks?" exclaimed Haldor. Alfgar nodded.

"It was he!" cried Ulf, fiercely. "The Egyptian dog!"

"Who?" broke out the surprised Saxon. "Who was he?"

"Eumarchus of Alexandria," returned Eadgar. "He is a noble and of the Greens, and is a suitor of the Princess Maria. Twice have our men been forced to whip his followers, and he no doubt recognised you as a Northman. But now, comrades, what are we to do?"

Again there fell a nervous silence, which was broken by Alfgar.

"It is in my mind, uncle, that we could do much if we struck at once."

"Speak out, Flamehair!" cried Ulf, impatiently, as he paused. "If you have any plan, give it to us."

"Are not the prison of Constantine and the quarters of the Princess at opposite ends of the city?" asked the young Saxon.

"Nearly so," answered his uncle, eyeing him keenly.

"And how many ships have we in the harbour?"

"Six of our own," rejoined Haldor, grimly, "and all the rest for the taking. Why?"

"Then here is my plan." Alfgar's eyes sparkled with eagerness, and he shook back his long hair as he leaned forward. "It is a desperate venture, but we are in hard straits. First get together all the men who would go from the city with Harald. Is the prison of Constantine near the water?"

"Aye," came the reply.

"Then you, Haldor, could take Harald's men and load what ships would be needed for the——"

"All are loaded and provisioned," growled Haldor. "Come to the plot of it, lad."

"So much the better!" cried Alfgar. "You, Haldor, with Harald's men, could raid the quarters of the Princess after nightfall to-night. Ulf, Eadgar, old Atli Farseer and I can go to the prison and free Harald. We can take to a boat and wait for you in the straits."

"Brave words," returned Ulf with a laugh, "but easier said than done, methinks."

"Why?" urged Alfgar. "A grapnel and a rope would take us over the wall and into the gardens. If there are guards, we can silence them; but as the mercenaries are close at hand we must avoid rousing them. We must trust to skill rather than force. If there is an alarm from the quarters of the Princess, so much the better for our plan, since that will draw off the troops."

A moment's silence, then Eadgar sprang to his feet.

"By the head of Canute! The plan is better than good!"

"Skoal, Flamehair!" shouted the others in huge delight, while Haldor wrung the young Saxon's hand.

"It is our only hope, at all events," he said, decidedly. "Shall we try it, comrades?"

"Try it?" roared Ulf. "We will carry it out!" And Eadgar nodded.

Ulf flung open the door and vanished with a shout. Haldor smiled quietly, and followed, as did the two Saxons. But as the news spread among the Varangars there was none of the wild excitement of the night before. Instead, men spoke with grim earnestness. Those who chose to leave the Greek service were told off to warn their comrades on the ships and on duty at the Palace, while those who chose to remain offered all the help in their power. These latter were mainly Franks, Russians, and Germans; a few Saxons stuck to Eadgar and Alfgar, but the bulk of the rebels were Danes and Northmen who had followed Harald through many a hard battle.

At the midday dinner in the guard-room the final plans were laid. The Palace guard for the night was chosen from the Franks, while all the rest were to aid the Northmen in the assault on the smaller palace of Princess Maria. Then the Frankish party would return while the rest, under Haldor, would embark after cutting the chain across the harbour mouth. They would pick up Harald and the other four on their way north through the straits.

Now the guard-rooms sprang into sudden activity. The men who were departing gathered their possessions from their quarters, although most of their booty and valuables had been sent to the ships or dispatched to King Jarisleif in Russia months before. Harald had long contemplated returning to Norway, and it was whispered among the men that the treasures in Jarisleif's keeping were greater than any king in the North had ever before owned.

Quietly but rapidly the men prepared. There was sharpening of weapons and polishing of armour. Eadgar took Alfgar into the armoury and there fitted him with his war gear. As the departing men had their pick of the booty by common consent, Alfgar chose a rich gold-hilted sword of fine steel from Spain, a plain steel helm with back-sweeping raven wings, and a byrnie of fine-meshed rings which reached to his knees. As he picked out the latter Eadgar commended his judgment.

"See," he said, taking the mail-coat and placing it against the wall, "now take a spear and let drive."

Alfgar flung the spear, which rebounded with a crash. When they examined the byrnie it showed no sign of the blow, and Eadgar nodded.

"You would never get a better, Flamehair. I remember that Harald took it when we sacked a Saracen castle in Africa, across from Sicily. It is a bit long, but you will soon grow into it. Now for a shield."

As all Harald's men carried shields bearing a red cross, the choosing of this was not difficult. Alfgar then picked out a light but very strong axe, and they returned to the guard-room.

There were just enough men to man two of Harald's largest ships, the *Crossbeak* and the *Dragon*. The hopes of all were high, and both Alfgar and Thiodolf the Skald kept up the spirits of the men until they were called to the evening meal. It was a silent assemblage that gathered about the long tables in the dining-hall. Only some eighty out of the two hundred Varangars were remaining. The families of the rest were by now on board the ships, but there were few who had not some relative or friend among the hostages seized three days before. The fate of these latter would hang on this night's work, and the Varangars, soon to become Vikings once more, ate in a grim silence that boded ill for any who stood in their way.

"Now leave your shield with Haldor," ordered Ulf as they arose from the table. He picked up a long dark garment and flung it to Alfgar. "Put on this monk's robe and draw

the hood over your helm; it is well to take no chances, and we have far to go."

During this afternoon Alfgar had heard the story of the day before. It seemed that Haldor had gained some inkling of the plot against Harald, and the seizure of the hostages had also alarmed him. It was known that Harald was on his way home, and a few men had been dispatched in a skiff to warn him, but they had been too late.

Atli, Ulf, Eadgar, and Alfgar quietly left the Palace by a side entrance, clad in their monk's robes. The night was just falling, and as they went along Alfgar's thoughts reverted to the evening before.

"What meant you," he whispered suddenly to his uncle, "by saying that Eumarchus, the Egyptian, was of the Greens? What race are they?"

"A race of Greeks, lad," smiled Eadgar. "Tsargrad is mad over chariot races, and the whole city is divided into two factions—the Blues and the Greens. At present the latter are in power, and there is great hatred among them for men of the old faith. Most of them hold to new doctrines, teachings of the heretics and doctors of the law, and their disputes enter the Palace itself. The Emperor is of the Blues, the Empress of the Greens. On racing days there are riots and free fights over half the city."

"I am sorry we go so soon," half sighed Alfgar. "It seems a shame to come to the greatest city in the world, only to leave it in a few hours."

"Nonsense," broke in the gruff voice of Ulf, who had been listening, "you were better off if you never had come, Flamehair. This is a place to sap men's hearts and fill their veins with water. Faugh! You are liable to get a dagger in the back at any time."

"That is not much worse," spoke up Atli with a chuckle, "than being burned in your bed, if what I have heard of Iceland be true!"

"Open warfare is different," protested Ulf, heatedly. "It is all very well to burn a man so long as he knows you are his foe—hello! There come a party of Greens! Drunken young nobles, by their looks."

Coming towards them along the street was a flare of torches, borne by flower-wreathed staggering men who sang and danced carelessly. As they caught sight of the seeming party of monks, a yell of delight went up.

"Sport, comrades, sport! Bait the anchorites! Surround them!"

As the Varangars disdained to flee, the revellers were soon about them, dancing and shouting forth heretical taunts. As the four pressed through them, one, more sober than the rest, stepped out and clutched the robe of Alfgar.

"Hold them, brethren!" he cried. "Bring a torch!"

Although he did not understand the words, Alfgar started at the voice and looked again at the speaker. As one brought forward a torch, he gave an angry exclamation—the man was Eumarchus the Egyptian! Barely had he recognised the man when Eumarchus pulled away his cowl with a yell. There was a startled cry as Alfgar's helm and golden-red hair showed, then the drunken crowd pressed orward.

"Varangars! Heretics! Death to the heretics!"

Alfgar felt something strike him heavily and shiver on his byrnie. The cowardly thrust roused him to action, and with a single blow of his fist he sent Eumarchus headlong in the mud. Then Ulf threw back his cowl and seized his blade. The sight of that shaggy red-beard sent the revellers back in panic.

"Out of the way, dogs!" snarled the Varangar, baring his blade. With a shriek of fear the Greeks turned and ran, while Eumarchus regained his feet and followed.

"Let him go," laughed Eadgar. "That was a goodly blow, lad, but next time strike on the chin or behind the ear."

"I lost my temper," admitted Alfgar, rubbing his knuckles and replacing his cowl. "However, I feel better now I have paid him out."

The attack on the palace of the Princess was to take place at midnight, and the four hurried onward. They were not molested again, and went forward at a brisk walk for half an hour. Then Ulf drew them into the shadow of a building and pointed to a wall twenty feet ahead.

"There is the prison," he whispered. "We are nearly opposite the summer-house that serves as a guard-cell for those of noble blood. No doubt Harald is there. Let us watch here for the sentinel."

A moment later the figure of a guard appeared, pacing along the top of the wall. After giving him time to get well past, Atli ran under the wall and cast up a muffled grapnel. At the second cast this caught, and the rope was dangling before them.

There were no words wasted. Ulf went up the rope hand over hand, and Eadgar after

Roused to action by the cowardly thrust, Alfgar struck out with his fist, sending Eumarchus headlong into the mud.

him. Alfgar followed, and when he reached the top he saw two forms struggling silently a dozen feet away. Then one went down with a faint clash of arms, and Ulf returned just as Atli came up.

"Take his helm and shield, Farseer," ordered the leader, "and do you keep ward in his place."

Atli nodded and left them. Pulling up the rope, Alfgar reset the grapnel and threw down the rope inside. One by one the three slipped down, and found themselves in deep shadow, among thick bushes.

"Follow me," whispered Ulf. "There may be guards in the place, though I think not. Step lightly!"

Eadgar followed him, then came Alfgar. A moment later they were out of the shadow of the wall. The night air was heavy with the scent of flowers, strange southern trees stood all about them, and Alfgar felt a curious sense of unreality, as if he were moving in a dream. This was quickly dispelled as Eadgar stopped and gripped his arm.

"Listen!"

A strange, shrill, faint noise came to them from afar. As the three stood listening, Ulf suddenly drew a deep breath.

"Norse war horns, by the eye of Odin!"

The Varangars had struck.

CHAPTER VII

THE LOOSING OF HARALD

"TO work, Ulf!" whispered Eadgar, eagerly. "We have no time to lose!" Without a word more the big leader turned and led the way. After five minutes of walking between bushes and trees they struck a gravel path, and now Ulf broke into a run. Then rose a dark mass before them.

"The summer-house!" grunted Ulf. "Steal up, Flamehair. You are lighter of foot than we—see if there are guards."

Alfgar obeyed, trembling with excitement. As he crept to the shadow of the walls, he saw that before him was a small house of one room, luxuriously furnished. The walls were made of growing trees, clipped on the inside, and he had no difficulty in seeing through the interstices.

Before him, on a rich couch, with rugs and silks all about, sat Harald Hardrede, his head in his hands. There were no guards in sight, and Alfgar tapped lightly on the wall. Harald raised his head, and the Saxon was shocked at the thin, haggard, fierce features that met his gaze.

"Are you guarded?" he asked in a whisper.

Harald sprang to his feet, realising whence the sound had come, flung open the door at one side, and a moment later held Alfgar in his arms. Then Ulf and Eadgar approached, and Harald for a moment was unable to speak.

"Thanks, comrades!" he said at length. "There are no guards nearer than the walls. What is forward?"

"That!" returned Eadgar, grimly, motioning to the south. Faint but distinct, another burst of war horns came to them, and in the faint light Alfgar saw Harald quiver suddenly. Then Ulf explained their plan as they started back towards the walls.

"So from here we go to the waterside and get a boat," he finished. "The ships will pick us up——"

"Peace!" laughed Harald, softly, seizing the rope and going up as he spoke. When they were all on the wall, Atli joined them, and the chief greeted him heartily. Then the rope was reversed, and a moment later they stood in the street below.

"This way!" cried Ulf, anxiously, as Harald started forward. Harald turned and laughed again.

"Give me your axe!" He poised the huge weapon and then swung it like a twig. "Am I your leader or not?"

"Aye," growled the perplexed Ulf. "Why—"

"Then think not that Harald slips away without leaving his mark," cried the chief, springing forward. "Follow, sea wolves!"

And then rose on the still night air that which the peace-loving Byzantines had never thought to hear so close to home—the battle cry of Hardrede. It was echoed by one wild yell from Ulf, then began a race that Alfgar never forgot through all his life.

Ahead of them, near two miles away, came a faint din of conflict and a spreading glare of light. It was a desperate thing Harald was attempting, for, unless he reached the Varangars before their work was done, his escape was cut off. He ran easily, his long hair flying behind and his single weapon gleaming in the moonlight, while after him came the others as best they might.

Alfgar had no fear about keeping up, running lightly and swiftly at his uncle's side despite the weight of his weapons. Atli Farseer, old as he was, made no complaint and managed to stick close to the young Saxon.

But Byzantium was in wild uproar. The glare of the fire, no less than the sound of fighting, brought out the inhabitants from every house, and only the yells of Harald and the sight of those five wild figures cleared the way, the people shrinking back in terror. Never did Harald slacken his pace, and always Alfgar felt the hot breath of Atli on his neck. Once a band of Greek troops turned in from a side street, but as Harald crashed into them and his axe came down they fled with a shriek of terror, and the way was clear.

On and on ran the five, through dwelling streets, shops, and markets, but ever the battle cry of Harald shrilled over the houses, and ever the crowds made room with shouts of fear. Alfgar wondered at the endurance of his leader, for Harald seemed tireless, and for all his shouting his breath seemed to come no quicker.

Once a dozen Arab bowmen, mercenaries, ran with them. But these Harald did not molest. He received a nod of recognition from the leader, and a few moments later the Arabs were left behind. Farther on, as the glare ahead seemed close to them, a little band of Venetians swung in behind and kept pace stoutly enough. Then, of a sudden, they came upon the scene.

Alfgar found himself running across a wide square, with a great stone building on the farther side. Part of this was in flames, and from the building itself came screams, shouts, the clash of steel and the ring of war horns.

Outside lay a score of bodies on the stones, and as they came to these the Varangars poured from the doors, laden with plunder.

At sight of the five there was one wild yell of delight. Then a dozen men clutched Alfgar and the others, and a moment later each of the five was standing on a shield, held aloft by brawny, battle-scarred arms. More of the Vikings poured out, then came a silence as Harald raised his hand.

"Comrades!" he shouted, and a quick yell went up at the word. "Comrades, are the hostages retaken?"

"Aye, Harald," roared Haldor, stepping out, "and sent down to the ships ere now."

"Then," went on Harald, lifting his axe, "it is in my mind that the Emperor dwells in the Smaller Palace near the Hippodrome. Let us seek him! Harald is loosed!"

"Harald is loosed!" As the leader leaped to the ground one wild yell echoed his words, and abandoning the Palace to the flames the Varangars surged forward. By this time the square was half filled with Greek and Arab troops, who made a faint-hearted stand. But when the Northmen struck them the ranks split apart with scarce a blow, and with Alfgar close at his heels Harald sped onward. It was a bad day for Byzantium, reflected the Saxon, when Harald Hardrede was trapped!

By this time the whole city was in an uproar. Alfgar gave all up for lost, thinking for a moment that the berserk fury was on Harald and his men, and that they had resolved to die like heroes. But he was mistaken, as he soon found. The terrible Varangars, although few in number, were the most dreaded fighting men of the empire; their prowess had been proved on a hundred fields, and Harald's recent exploits in Syria were fresh in all minds. Nor was the actual cause of the revolt yet determined. There were shouts that the city was taken by the Moslem, others cried that the Empress was dead, others that the Greens and Blues were rioting again.

Only one thing occurred to Alfgar on the short dash to the Smaller Palace. This was when, as he ran, he stumbled and tripped another man. As he helped the latter up hastily, the man struck away his hand with an oath, and Alfgar knew him for Svein the Dane. There was no time to explain, so the lad hurried on with the rest, but he remembered later the scowl of rage on the Viking's face.

Upon reaching the Palace of the Emperor, a small building set in the midst of gardens and surrounded by walls, they met a check for the first time. The guard of Nubian archers, brave men all, sent more than one Northman reeling back with a shaft through his throat; but Harald charged them desperately and burst through. Alfgar crossed blades with a tall Greek officer and was pressed back momentarily; then he remembered one of Atli's tricks, knocking up the other's sword and throwing forward his shield full in the officer's face, with all his weight behind it. The man staggered, then went over backward, and Alfgar rushed on after Harald.

The corridors of the palace were full of half-wakened, frightened men and women. A few of the Nubians tried to hold back the Northmen, but their defence was brief. Ulf seized a torch as the last archer fell, and held it to a curtain. In a flash the flame ran up the silk to the cedar woodwork, and Alfgar knew that their stay must be brief indeed.

"Harald is loosed!" The terrible cry, mingled with the music of war horns, echoed as the men spread out to plunder. As if by magic, Eadgar and Atli appeared before Harald, Haldor, and Alfgar, who had remained in the audience-hall, and behind them they dragged a man with weak, frightened face and trembling hands. It was the Emperor of the Eastern Empire himself!

A little thrill of awe ran through the Saxon lad as he gazed on this inheritor of the greatest throne in the world, dragged from the midst of his guards by a handful of men. He wondered if he were in a dream, as he saw the purple-clad man clasp the knees of the Viking chief and beg for pity, with tears streaming down his upturned face.

Harald looked at him for a moment with contempt, then spurned him aside with his foot, and turned to Atli and Eadgar.

"Take the cowardly dog to the ships," he ordered. Harald detested nothing in the world so much as a coward. "And get the men together. We must be off."

As the men saved their plunder from the flames and assembled, they found that the Greek troops were gathering fast. There was no time to be lost, and now Alfgar got a glimpse of the quick brain that had been behind so many of Harald's victories. Knowing well the nature of the Greeks, Harald ordered his men to scatter handfuls of the gold and jewels they were laden with into the midst of the opposing troops. As the latter broke their ranks in a mad scramble, the Vikings charged, the royal captive in their midst.

Before that mad assault the Greeks

crumbled away. Alfgar, at the side of his uncle; and Harald, sent down two who barred their way, and in the whirl of excitement the young Saxon lost sight of the fact that this was the first blood he had ever spilled. He knew only that there was a gleam of steel in front of him; he felt his sword crash upon armour, and then with a great shout the Varangars were through the foe. For a little way they ran at top speed, but found that there was no pursuit.

Here there was a brief halt while the two parties separated. The Franks and Saxons, with the others who were not returning to the Northland, bade their comrades farewell, and swung off to the barracks. Harald put himself at the head of the others, and led them towards the harbour, the royal prisoner in their midst.

Alfgar, breathing hard, was thrilled with a wild exultation such as he had never felt before. Now he realised for the first time the glory of victory behind a leader such as Harald; the long voyage from England had been wild enough in its way, but this was altogether different. Harald was setting forth to take a throne, with a little band of men and two ships—setting forth half across the known world, and at the very start embroiling himself with the whole Greek Empire! And he, Alfgar the Saxon, was one of that little force destined to make history!

The monastery, the lessons, the quiet garden with its white-clad men, all seemed very dim and faint to him, as the war horns thrilled up over the raging city and the sky behind leaped into red flame. The streets were filled with excited crowds, chariots thundered past, but the Vikings were unmolested.

"What think you of our leader, Flamehair!" chuckled Eadgar, as they swept along the streets.

"He is wonderful, uncle!" exclaimed the lad, eagerly. "Who but he would have dared capture the Emperor himself!"

"It is in my mind that he will gain Norway in like manner," put in Ulf, behind. "What a night! Not since we drove the Saracens out of a city somewhere beyond Jerusalem, and fired the place after them, have we had such fun. How like you the Varangar service, lad?"

"Viking, rather," laughed Alfgar. "The Varangars, it seems to me, are about disbanded. How about the men at the ships, Ulf? Can they cut the chain across the harbour?"

"It is done," spoke up Haldor. "Stuf and Thiodolf took down the hostages to the ships, and they promised to cut the chain. But how about the other, the great chain across the narrow straits above the city?"

"That will be a different matter," rejoined Ulf. "But trust Harald to find some way."

"Is there a second chain?" cried Alfgar, in wonder.

"Aye, thicker through than my body," growled the big chief. "It keeps out all ravagers from the north—ships from Russia and the like—each night. Ah, here we are!"

Alfgar saw a flare of tossing torches, two dragon ships drawn to the wharf ahead, and a crowd of Vikings rushing forward with a yell of delight, and knew that the danger was over. Harald smiled at his men, strode to the astone figging of the wharf, swung his axe aloft and whirled it far out into the tossing waters.

"Harald is loosed!" he cried, turning to the men behind, a great light of exultation in his eagle eyes. "To Norway and a throne!"

"Skoal!" and Alfgar found himself yelling madly with the rest, "Skoal to Harald of Norway! Skoal to Harald Sigurdson! Skoal!"

CHAPTER VIII

TO NORWAY!

IN ten minutes all the Varangars were aboard the two chosen ships. Alfgar and his uncle, with Haldor, went aboard that of Harald, the *Crossbeak*, while Ulf took command of the *Dragon*. Atli Farseer, who was known personally or by reputation to many of the men, was made steersman of Harald's ship. Eadgar was given command of the forecastle men, while Harald kept Alfgar by him in the stern, the half-dozen captives being placed in the cabin. When Ulf had likewise arranged his men, Harald gave a blast on his war horn and the ropes were cast off.

"So, wolf cub," muttered old Atli to the young Saxon, "you have had your first taste of battle! How did it like you?"

"I had small time to think," laughed Alfgar, laying aside his weapons, for they were now drawing out into the harbour. "In truth, Atli, it seems like a desperate venture!" he added, more seriously.

"Aye, with any save Harald," growled the Viking, his eye resting on the tall figure of Harald a few feet distant. "Best snatch a little sleep now, lad. There is little wind and we will be two or three hours in reaching the

great cable, up the strait. You have had a hard day of it."

Alfgar laughed at this advice, but within a few moments he soon found it good. When the strain of the excitement was gone and the harbour lights with the flare behind died down to a glare upon the horizon, he suddenly realised that he was horribly tired, and sought the shelter of the cabin. The oars had been taken in, and the ship was forging slowly ahead before a light breeze as Alfgar threw himself down on a pile of plunder-filled sacks and went off to sleep.

He was wakened by a heavy shock. Springing up, he seized his byrnie and drew it on as he gained the deck. The two ships were gunwale to gunwale, and the leaders were talking at the rail while the men clustered about. On either hand, in the clear starlight, Alfgar could see the dark line of the shores, while only a dim light on the horizon showed where Byzantium lay. He made his way through the men to the side of his uncle, still rubbing his eyes sleepily.

"No use trying to cut it, Harald," Ulf of Iceland was saying. "We would have the Thracians and Libyans buzzing about our ears in no time. The best way is to land and rush the Thracian guard-house on the east shore. Then we can cast loose the chain and let the ships by."

"There are half a dozen war galleys up here, too," added Haldor, thoughtfully. "It is a hard nut to crack, Hardrede."

Harald did not reply. Alfgar saw that he was frowning and playing with his sword-hilt, and evidently the expedition had encountered some obstacle which all their leader's craft and skill was unable to surmount. For the moment he could not guess what it was, and plucked his uncle's sleeve with a low query.

"The great chain, lad. Yonder, ahead of us," and Eadgar pointed over the rail between the prows. Then for the first time Alfgar noticed a thin dark line stretching just in front of the ships and almost dipping into the waves —the mighty chain which guarded the straits.

"Best return past the city," growled a voice behind. "Then we can go on home past Spain and England. There will be more booty that way——"

"Silence!" exclaimed Harald, angrily. "Who disputes my rule here?"

None answered, and all shrank before his eye. Alfgar, turning hastily, caught sight of the fierce face of Svein near him, but he had no time for conjecture as a sudden idea leaped into his brain.

"Oh! If it dips——" he began impulsively, then stopped. Harald swung around and noted Alfgar's presence for the first time with a smile.

"Ah, skald, I missed you! What was that word of yours?"

"I thought of something," cried Alfgar, eagerly, half afraid of being ridiculed.

"Out with it, Flamehair," laughed Ulf, harshly. "Those thoughts of yours are like to prove of worth, it is in my mind."

A mutter of approval went up from the men; for all had heard of how the Saxon had planned Harald's escape, and Alfgar was already a prime favourite.

"Why," said the lad, hesitating, "I remembered something in the saga of King Olaf, your brother, that Atli taught me on the voyage from England. You remember, Harald, how he trapped the Swede when he was a lad?"

"You mean by the chain that he drew up underneath the ship, overturning her?" answered Harald, puzzled.

"Yes," assented Alfgar, eagerly, as his idea took shape. "Wouldn't this chain dip in the middle?"

"Right!" and Harald gave him a clap on the shoulder that sent him staggering against Eadgar. The quick brain of the leader caught the plan instantly, and without giving Alfgar a chance to proceed he turned to the others with rapid orders.

"Ulf, put all your men in the stern, save only the rowers. When we find where the chain dips in the centre of the channel row straight over it, then have the men run forward instantly. It will go hard but the ships will run over the chain without trouble!"

There was a murmur of approbation, then Ulf leaped back to his own vessel and the two ships parted company. Hurriedly the men crowded into the stern while the oars were put out, and five minutes later the chain, for a distance of thirty or forty feet, disappeared beneath the waves. When this place was located the rowers backed water, then made a spurt ahead.

There came a slight shock, the keel scraped along the chain and the prow of the *Crossbeak* rose high in the air. Without waiting for the order, the Vikings dashed forward into the bow, and the ship slid across the chain easily. A low shout of delight rose from the men as the *Dragon* came close behind, but the shout changed to a horror-struck silence.

Turning to watch the other ship, Alfgar saw her prow slide up, black against the stars. But her men waited too long, or she had slid too far, for even as Alfgar looked to see her slide over, there came a sudden rending crash and a wild yell as the *Dragon* split in two.

"Back oars!" roared Harald. The order was not needed, for already the men were working desperately. Alfgar threw his weight on an oar, but the other ship had gone down like a stone, heavy laden as she was. Most of the men still wore their heavy armour and had gone down with her, only some twenty being picked up.

Alfgar, leaning over the rail with the others and helping the rescued men over the side, suddenly felt a quick, sharp thrust that all but sent him into the waves below. Fortunately, one of the other men caught him as he lost his balance, and he whirled about angrily.

But no one seemed to be paying him any attention. Bewildered, Alfgar at length concluded that one of the crew, running past, had bumped against him, and he said nothing. Still, busy as he was with the rescued men, the young Saxon felt that that shove had come from no friendly hand. The thought angered him, but he was helpless and deemed it best not to speak of the happening to Eadgar or Atli. After all, it might have been an accident, he decided; but he was soon to find out his mistake.

With saddened hearts but undaunted spirits the Vikings left the spot where their comrades had perished. Few but had lost a friend or old companion, and bitter were the words directed towards the cabin, where lay the captive Emperor of the East.

Alfgar was no longer sleepy and he sat on the deck beside Atli, enjoying the night immensely. It was hard for him to realise that a splendid ship and two-thirds of her crew had just gone down into the black waters; but as his gaze fell upon the lonely figure of Harald staring at the sky ahead, Alfgar comprehended something of the bitterness that must be raging within his leader's breast. As the ship sped to the north the men sat moodily about the decks, reclothing those saved from the waves and talking in low voices. Their hilarity was gone now, for even the most reckless had been sobered by the sudden loss of their friends.

"It is strange to think of all that has taken place within the last week," said Alfgar to the steersman. "Here Raud and all his Vikings save a few are gone, we have had a brief glimpse of the greatest city in the whole world, and now we are in almost unknown water and bear in the cabin the Emperor of the Roman Empire, a captive!"

"And the world is ours for the taking, also," added Atli, drily. "In sooth, Flamehair, I would follow Hardrede back to Tsargrad if he said the word; if half the stories his men tell are true he is the greatest leader and hardest fighter Norway has ever produced. They say he has sent vast treasures ahead to Jarisleif of Russia, and that this is not so mad a venture as we had thought."

"What is Russia?" asked Alfgar. "I have heard little of it save from a few of our old men in Raud's ship. Is it civilised?"

"Civilised?" chuckled Atli Farseer. "Why, lad, Kiev is called the 'city of four hundred churches,' and is nearly as great as Tsargrad! It is Jarisleif's capital, and worthy of him. They say he has given his people unheard-of laws, such as the Greeks have, that his power is immense, and that his land is far more civilised even than your England.

"When Harald's brother, King Olaf, was first driven from Norway he found a refuge in Russia, and after he fell at Stiklestad Harald fled to Jarisleif. They are firm friends, and it is said that Harald is thinking of marrying Elizabeth, Jarisleif's daughter. I wonder what Harald will do with the Emperor!"

Alfgar, too, wondered what would be the fate of their hapless prisoner. There seemed to be no pursuit, but he felt a sudden pity at the thought of the weak ruler, torn from his palace in the night and carried off to an unknown destination. Would Harald simply hold him as hostage? Too well Alfgar knew the Viking nature, and how the loss of the *Dragon* had implanted longings for fierce revenge in the men's hearts.

Thinking thus, he leaned back against the bulwark. The ship heeled over slightly under a freshening breeze that sang softly through the ropes in answer to the rippling music of the waves beneath, and little by little Alfgar for the second time that night dropped off to sleep.

He opened his eyes with a strange sense of unreality. He was rolled up in Atli's scarlet cloak, and over him waved the green boughs of a tree! Sitting up, surprised at the absence of motion, Alfgar found that the ship was lying at rest moored to a high bank, that many of the men were on the shore, and that the sun was well up. As he gained his feet Eadgar approached.

(To be continued.)

"They're rejecting one recruit in five," said Elsie. "I'm afraid you'd be the one in your five, Toby."

A Tale of a Recruit

Illustrated by T. M. R. Whitwell

I

"ELSIE, how old do I look?" asked Toby Trotter, lifting his nose from his morning paper.

It was the time when "K." was calling loudly for his second hundred thousand men. Everyone was thinking, reading, and dreaming War, and no likely looking chap could walk along a road or a street in civilian garb but people wondered why he hadn't got his khaki on.

Elsie Trotter was lying in a wicker chair on the lawn studying the war pictures in another paper. She was a good-looking girl of the athletic type, and could lick Trotter at all games except boxing and shooting (if you call that a game). For a feather-weight Trotter could hit wonderfully hard, and from his catapult days, when he became a terror to every bird, cat, and water-rat in the neighbourhood, he had been a dead shot—not an ordinarily good shot, but a dead shot. They are not many in number, but their skill is uncanny.

"Stand up," said Elsie.

Wincing, Trotter drew himself up to the full of his brief stature. He was slight in proportion, and, with it all, had an extreme youthfulness of appearance that he was ashamed of now, though it was more than likely he would be proud of it when he was fifty.

"Turn round," said Elsie.

Trotter turned round.

"Walk down the lawn and back again." Trotter did.

Elsie shook her head.

"You won't have a ghost of a chance. You don't look a day over sixteen, you haven't a hair on your face, your chest measurement is about twenty-six, and even *I* go a stone heavier. Very patriotic of you and all that, Toby, but they don't want fellows that the Germans could put in their pockets."

"I've seen some 'Terriers' as small as me," objected Trotter, humbly.

"Yes, but ever so much thicker; and they didn't wear specs."

Trotter hastily pulled off his spectacles, and put them into their case.

"They're only for reading. My long sight is all right."

"And how about your asthma?" queried Elsie.

"I'm growing out of it," said Trotter, stoutly.

The truth-telling sister shook her head. "Sorry, Toby, but you won't go through, I'm sure. If you were a hulking beast like Sam they'd have you first look, but you're too much of a midget. And as Sam isn't having any—*thank* you—our family won't contribute any heroes to the war. Kiss me, dear, and then go and pot sparrows."

"I'm going to have a shot at it," said

Trotter. "At a time like this they can't afford to be particular——"

"They're rejecting one in five," said Elsie, well up in all this sort of thing. "I don't want to damp you, but I'm afraid you'd be the one in your five. Oh! here's Sam! Good morning, Sam! What d'you think, Sam? Toby's going for the shilling."

"My good man——" roared Sam.

"That's what I tell him," put in Elsie.

"May as well have a try," said Trotter, doggedly.

"Well, if they take him," suggested Elsie, "you, Sam, will have to go and look after him."

"I promise faithfully I'll do that," said Sam, comfortably, as he lit a cigarette. "Perhaps they'll make it a condition."

"Well, I'm going now," said Toby, adding, with a touch of a sneer in his voice, "and you two can read about the war and thank Heaven you're a hundred miles away from it."

But Elsie had left off laughing.

"No, Toby, old man; don't think I don't appreciate your martial spirit. If you're bent on it, I'll go with you and keep your strength up with chocolate while you wait. Sammy can stay at home and mind house."

"Nay, I'm with you," said Cousin Sam. "Never shall it be said that the Boulters hung back while the Trotters went to the Front——"

"Except to keep a tennis appointment," sounded a new voice, and with the words a tall, boyish-looking girl, of about Elsie's age, in white dress, stockings and shoes, and a racket under her arm, was upon them. "You'd forgotten that."

"*So* we had!" cried Elsie. "Squat here, Madge, while we tell you of our designs on Germany."

"What is it?" demanded Madge. "Are you going to 'detain' the Schrodmanns' five-tonner that they've got moored off the beach? I've been chaffing them frightfully about having their telephone cut off. A bit thick, isn't it—such awfully nice *Englishy* people as they are!"

"No, nothing to do with the Schrodmanns. . . . Toby's going to 'list," said Elsie.

"Going to *what!*"

"Take the King's shilling and shed his blood for his country!" bawled Sam.

Madge was about to laugh when she did something worse. She changed her expression for one of mock gravity.

"I applaud the idea, on condition that we play our five-set tennis match first."

"I thought of going at once," said Toby.

"It might end the war," said Madge, preserving her gravity, "if it got to the Germans' ears that Toby Trotter had joined the army. Now, here's my offer, Toby. You stop and play the match, as arranged, and if you're taken for the New Army I'll make you six flannel shirts, like the papers ask for. As I haven't touched a needle for *years* you can imagine what that'll mean."

"I shan't want six," said Toby. "I shall give three to Sam. He's promised to 'list if I'm taken."

"Righto!" assented Madge, easily. She stood up, a fine figure of a girl, radiating health and energy. "Let's make a start with the tennis."

II

THE ordeal, postponed for twenty-four hours at the instance of Madge Smith, now taking long strides over the Littlebeach Golf Links, was at length at hand. Toby was getting quite close to the door. It was four-thirty in the afternoon, and Toby, who supported by Elsie and Sam, had been there since eight, was feeling very done. Elsie, of course, had not lined up with the would-be recruits, nor had Sam Boulter; but they visited him at intervals, Elsie to feed him with chocolate and Sam with cigarettes. Toby took some digging-out, too, for there was a very tall man in front of him, a very tall man behind him, and he was jammed between two large, bull-necked men of the drover species. With these sturdy fellows clamouring for admittance to His Majesty's Army, Toby's presence there seemed almost an impertinence.

However, his turn came at last, and never had Toby Trotter felt so small as when he was admitted by the recruiting sergeant to a room where sat a smart officer of the Regulars at a deal table, with a clerk at an adjoining table.

The officer summed up Toby in about a millionth of a second. He shook his head.

"Sorry," he said. "A bit too young. Next, sergeant."

"Half a minute, sir," cried Toby, anxiously, "I'm nineteen in three months' time."

"Or eighteen?"

"Nineteen, sir, on my honour."

The officer really did feel sorry—the little chap looked so keen.

"Near enough. Measure him, sergeant."

The peg of the height measure was at six feet six, and Toby hardly felt longer than the peg as he stood under it. Good-humouredly the sergeant brought it down, grunted, and told Toby to step on to the weighing machine.

"Five foot, three and three-quarters *in his boots*, sir; and seven stones exact."

"Little men have altered the map of Europe before now," said the officer. "Let the doctor see him."

"This way," said the recruiting sergeant, his big moustache hiding a smile.

Toby was told to strip, and then he waited his turn by the side of a large young labourer. The latter, with his clear blue eyes and ruddy skin, was passed in three minutes, and then the doctor turned to Toby with a sarcastic, "And *now* what have you got for me, sergeant?"

"Not much except *sperrit*, sir," said the sergeant, standing aside as if he were exhibiting a blood colt for sale.

The stethoscope went dotting over Toby's limited back and front—deflated—while he said "ninety-nine" several times, and though it lingered a bit on the top part of his chest it soon went on.

"Bit of trouble with your tubes when you were younger?"

"Yes, a bit, sir," replied Toby.

"Pretty sound now. . . . Just expand. Yes, not so bad; but you're small—small. However, slip your shirt on. Now open your mouth. All right. Clean as a shark's. Now, then: How many spots on that card? . . . You can shut your mouth now."

"Nine," said Toby at a wild venture.

"Three too many." He looked closely at Toby's nose, and, of course, detected the dent of his spectacles. "And I see why. Sorry. Can't take you." And he turned to the next "would-be."

"But I'm a game shot, sir!" cried Toby, in despair.

"Eh!" And the doctor dragged him to the window. "See that hoarding? Now, see the poster with the red *fleur-de-lis* on it? What's the lettering underneath?"

"'Registered trade-mark,'" said Toby.

The doctor rubbed his eyes.

"I didn't mean that. I can't read that myself."

"Oh, 'Allinson's Ales,'" said Toby, deciphering the big words at a glance.

The doctor glanced at the sergeant. "Bit of a mixture, sergeant? Still, he can see a German."

"But what'll happen if a German comes at him with his butt-end?" demanded the sergeant, and simultaneously his fist shot out and caught Toby heavily in the chest. Trotter reeled momentarily—he wasn't expecting it—then, a little hysterical after all this waiting (on chocolate only) and questioning and sounding, he lost his head, and let fly at the red, grinning face looking down at him.

Thump! And the sergeant was on the floor. But his scowl vanished on the heels of his smothered oath, and by the time he was on his feet he was grinning ruefully.

"If he can floor a German like that, he'll do, sir," he said, rubbing his jaw.

"I think so," said the doctor, turning away with a smile.

"Get into your clothes," growled the soldier, and within three minutes Toby was standing in front of the recruiting officer again.

"Passed you? Good. Read him the oath," he added to the clerk, "and show him where to sign. . . . Done?" He dropped a new shilling into Toby's palm. "Report yourself at nine o'clock to-morrow, Private Trotter."

"What! You're through?" demanded Elsie.

"Here it is!" cried Toby, exultantly, as he displayed the shilling.

"Go on, Sam!" said Elsie, her voice trembling with excitement. "Your turn!"

"Oh, *hang!*" said Sam Boulter.

III

A FORTNIGHT had passed, and the men recruited in the neighbourhood for the new army were still regarded as little better than a novel sort of toys by their friends and acquaintances—even with their khaki on. The small figure of Toby Trotter, for instance, in his bulging tunic, his puttees, his straps and pouches, and the big rifle slung over his shoulder, was followed with broad smiles. It would seem that the East Coast was in a parlous way if hefty German invaders were to be thrust back by such midgets.

The headquarters of the battalion to which Toby and Sam had been allotted were at Bigbeach, and in their brief hours off they went over to Littlebeach, and enjoyed

food which seemed princely after the rough camp fare.

Toby had made good quickly, and earned the commendation of his instructors. In fact, when the Commandant had asked for a few smart men to act as auxiliaries to the Territorials on coast patrol, he was one of the first selections. In view of this he felt it to be hard luck to be still treated as a joke.

"Somehow," said Madge Smith one day, as she ran her eyes over Toby's khaki-clad form, "it all seems to be a sort of game. Yesterday you were Toby Smith, reading for your medical prelim., and to-day you're a soldier. I can't realise the necessity of you myself."

"Nevertheless," said Toby, "on Monday night I start patrol duty on the cliffs."

"Oh, then," put in Madge, sarcastically, "you'll be able to see that the Schrodmanns don't signal news to German warships in the 'offing,' or whatever they call it. It really is too bad," she added, warmly. "Mr. Schrodmann has been in England thirty years, and hates the old Kaiser like poison—and here he is being subjected to all sorts of indignities just because he's a German. I call it too bad." She caught hold of little Toby and shook him. "So don't you go prowling round their place and putting on airs just because you're in khaki. Dora Schrodmann was at school with me, and is my best pal after Elsie, let me tell you."

"I shan't go near them—don't you worry," said Toby, as he wriggled out of Madge's muscular grasp.

"The old boy gave me a jolly good cigar yesterday," said Sam Boulter, "and when I told him the Belgians had captured half a million of his chaps, he just grinned."

"Colonel Matthews wouldn't play golf with him if he wasn't as right as a gun," said Madge. "Now, you heroes," she added, "it's eight-thirty and time you were getting back to camp."

"I say," said Toby, as he rose, "how about those shirts?"

"Haven't done a stitch yet," said Madge.

"You've got to do six," said Toby, "and mind you don't go palming off ready-made ones on me."

"No hurry," said Madge.

Toby stood still and looked at her.

"Yes, there *is* a bit of a hurry. When I've finished my drill I'm going to volunteer for active service."

"They wouldn't be so cruel as to let you go!" jeered Madge.

"That remains to be seen," said Toby, shortly. "Come on, Sam."

They had not gone a hundred yards when Sam Boulter suddenly exclaimed: "Why, here *is* the old chafer!"

And a few more strides brought them face to face with Mr. Schrodmann.

"Ah! Good afternoon!" cried the German in the easy tone of a leisured English gentleman. "Going back to camp?"

"If Toby's legs will hold out as far," replied Boulter with a grin.

A slight smile played over Mr. Schrodmann's features as he surveyed Toby's diminutive form.

"I daren't come and watch you at drill," he said, ruefully, "but I've offered my house to the Admiralty as a convalescent hospital."

"Awfully jolly of you," said Boulter. And they saluted and walked on. "There you are," he added. "British to the core—what?"

"'M—perhaps," replied Trotter.

IV

It was lonely work, patrolling the cliffs at night, the silence only broken by the gentle splash of the waves on the beach far below and the sighing of the breeze through the bushes clinging to the cliff's face. Toby Trotter had a length of three hundred yards to guard. He had never known hours pass so slowly as these which he was cast to spend on sentry-go. It wasn't as if there was any real danger to keep him on the alert—the warships scouring the sea would attend to that. His presence there was merely part of a precautionary measure. There was no fort or magazine or aerodrome to watch. It was just a region of high cliffs, this, where no invader, armed with coast-maps telling a tale plain for all to read, would dream of landing. Toby, as he paced the narrow cliff-walk, felt very unimportant and unnecessary.

This was the fourth night of his patrol duty, and so far not a soul had come near him. Warned by the stories published in the papers of people who had ignored a challenge being shot, the public were keeping well clear of the patrolled area. Who could

tell but sheer nerves might cause one of these young Tommies to loose off before one had time to answer his challenge!

He had come on duty at midnight. For four hours he would pace the cliff, listening to the monotone of the breaking waves and watching for the first grey streaks of dawn. Lonely work—and he was burning for action.

Nearly every light was out. It would be well after twelve now. . . . Yes, the church clock was striking the half after twelve. He was gazing seaward when a slight exclamation fell upon his ear. He turned quickly, to perceive a glint of white some twenty yards away. He brought his rifle to his hip, and across the furze rang his sharp challenge: "*Halt! Who goes there?*"

But in place of the reassuring "Friend!" to his chagrin in response came merely a burst of girlish laughter, the notes of which he recognised only too well. It was Madge, and her companion he guessed to be Dora Schrodmann, as the Schrodmanns' house, some two hundred yards distant, was the nearest to his beat, and he perceived light streaming from its front door as the girls scuttled back.

The blood rose in his face, for he was in earnest about his soldiering, and these girls seemed to regard it as a prime jest. The addition of a few inches to his stature, and he would have been accepted as part and parcel of the military machine. As it was, he was pooh-poohed as a midget, and an impaired one at that, whose enlistment had been a ghastly fluke. For he had preserved silence about his interview with the doctor—the recruiting sergeant had dropped him a hint to that effect—so none knew that Toby Trotter had practically battered his way into the Army.

As he turned away he wondered whether he would ever get a chance to show Madge what was in him. It did not seem likely that he would just at present, since he had nothing to do except patrol a few hundred yards of cliff-top. Somehow he felt he didn't care what anybody else thought of him if only Madge would take him seriously. Perhaps, he conceded, it was natural that she should hold him in some contempt, for she was the taller by inches, physically stronger, and easily his master at such games as he had ever played with her. But it was hardly playing *the* game, he felt, to come and chaff him when he was on sentry-go.

Soon the lights of Littlebeach were all out, and he was left to get through the long hours of darkness as best he could. A cold breeze came up from the sea, and with it a slight drizzle. He turned up the collar of his great-coat, and set himself to face this added discomfort. To get wet through was, after all, part of a soldier's lot, but he wondered how those tubes of his would stand it.

The night wore slowly on. A prowling destroyer flashed its searchlight over the cliffs and passed on its silent way, leaving the darkness all the blacker for the momentary illumination. Some creature of the wild rustled by Toby and disappeared. And so the hours crept on, until at last surrounding objects began to take a dim, ghostly shape. Thankfully looking towards the east, Toby at length perceived a faint pink flush appearing in the sky. The dawn was at hand, and his vigil was nearing its close.

At a gap in the cliffs a quarter of a mile away Toby saw a burly form appear. It was the sergeant of the patrol completing his rounds. He exchanged a brief word with Toby and passed on. In another ten minutes Toby would be at liberty to make his way to barracks, snatch some food, and sleep like a log till noon. He yawned and shivered. He was dog-tired, hungry, and very cold.

So this was soldiering, for which he had yearned, for which, for the nonce, he had abandoned his medical text-books. So far—only to be laughed at. Numbed and weary though he was, his face grew hot again. Involuntarily he looked back towards the Schrodmanns' house, and his face hardened. Madge might see fit to make fun of him, but was it quite sporting of her to do it before these Germans, nice and "Englishy" as they might be? Why, but for these very people, he would not be on guard here!

Toby continued to look at the Schrodmanns' house. It was curious, but at that moment he had perceived a figure cross the lawn. It was a new house, and the garden was surrounded only by a low wooden fence. . . . Somebody up early. Toby, glad to look at anything, went on looking at the Schrodmanns' house. If it were Mr. Schrodmann, why was he up so early? If it were anybody else, who was it?

Toby stiffened. It might be somebody who had no business there. It was certainly a curious coincidence that, as he glanced towards the house, somebody should cross

the lawn. Might it not be as well for him to take a squint at the intruder? He was, of course, supposed to keep to the cliff-path —his beat had been clearly indicated to him —but he felt he might safely turn inland a little. So he strolled through the furze towards the Schrodmanns' house. Anything for a change, and he was sick of this cliff-path.

Two hundred yards back, lying parallel with the Schrodmanns' house, grew a thick clump of blackberry bushes. He made a detour in its direction, going slowly. In the grey of the early dawn only the sharpest eyes would be likely to detect him.

Gaining the clump of bushes, he quickly placed himself where he could see without being seen. Then he took his field-glasses from the case slung over his shoulder, and got them on to the Schrodmanns' garden. The powerful lenses drew the garden right up to him, and as he gazed he grew rigid. Two figures were standing in the yard. The smaller was in a dressing-gown, the larger held some sort of basket in his hands.

And just as Mr. Schrodmann—for his was the smaller figure—turned and, as it seemed, gazed straight at Toby, the larger man opened the basket and took a pigeon out of it.

When Toby found Mr. Schrodmann's eyes full upon him he flinched, and was for dropping to the ground, when he realised that the German's naked eyes could not pierce the screen afforded by the blackberry bushes. Satisfied by his survey of the neighbourhood that not a soul was stirring, Mr. Schrodmann stroked the bird's proud, strong neck. He seemed to be talking to it. Then Toby saw something white appear in his fingers. The man holding the bird lifted its right wing, and the two heads came together as Mr. Schrodmann fastened the paper under the wing.

Toby had seen enough. He rammed the glasses back into their leather case, and

In a flash Toby's steel was covering the spy again, and the fellow shrank back in the doorway.

picked up his rifle. He was no longer interested in the two men, but was watching the chimney-pots of the house.

But he kept his rifle down. The glint of the steel barrel mustn't be seen.

He watched.

Ah!

The pigeon had risen.

Still rising, the pigeon was circling to give its instinct time to say in what direction its home lay. Higher it went. And now it was taking wider circles. Describing the widest of all, inland now it flew, and then came sweeping round, head on to the sea, high over the blackberry bushes where——

Bang!

And Toby, his heart beating fast, his face white, his eyes and mouth open, watched the pretty creature stagger. He waited for no more, but, bursting from his cover, was almost in time to catch the pigeon as it reached the furze. One wing, rising with a last convulsive movement, showed something white beneath.

Toby picked up the hapless pigeon and thrust it into the pocket of his great-coat. He had trapped the messenger. Now for its masters.

Shouldering his gun, he walked through the furze, across the road, and without hesitation into the Schrodmanns' garden. No one was there, and no sign that anyone had been there. He went round to the front and rang the bell. There was no answer; and he rang again. . . . At length a window was thrown open, and a sleepy voice inquired: "Who is it?"

"Is that you, Mr. Schrodmann?"

"Yes; and who are you?"

"Consider yourself under arrest, sir," said Toby.

"What! Is that you, Mr. Trotter? What does this mean?"

"You will see. Meanwhile, see that nobody leaves the house."

And on the word Toby, a certain sound having reached his ear, raced round to the back just in time to cover a man who was crossing the lawn.

"Hands up!"

And the hands went up on the instant.

"Walk before me. Look sharp."

The man, a dark-faced fellow with cunning eyes, after bestowing a respectful glance upon Toby's bayonet, walked before him. As they reached the front of the house Toby raised his rifle and fired seawards. But in a flash his steel was covering the spy again, and the fellow shrank into the doorway.

Toby had not to wait long. In a few minutes hurrying footsteps were audible, and two of his fellow sentries appeared. Another minute, and the sergeant had arrived, too. Toby, with a brief explanation, lugged out the pigeon and handed it to his superior. The sergeant unfastened the little white piece of paper, and a glance at the German characters inscribed thereon was enough for him. He happened to be a schoolmaster who knew German.

"Good!" he said. "A very smart piece of work, Private Trotter."

"And a beastly clever thing to do with a single bullet, Trotter," added one of Toby's fellow sentries.

V

Elsie Trotter was sewing industriously when Madge Smith's face appeared at the window.

"Hullo, old girl! Good for a round?"

"Sorry. Doing these, as you won't."

And Elsie held up a flannel shirt.

Madge, for her part, held up her left hand.

"I've been at it all the morning. Look at the needle-pricks! It's no use, old girl. He'll be ashamed to wear them."

"No. Toby will regard anything you make as perfect."

Madge got through the window.

"D'you think so?" she asked, slowly.

"Sure of it."

Madge deposited her clubs on the sofa, and sat down by her friend.

"Then I'll watch you and take a lesson."

"Do," said Elsie.

And a brown-faced caddie waited in vain all the week for his accustomed mistress.

In the Scrum—and Out.

By E. H. D. Sewell.

(Second Article)

THE way in which players come to be forwards or backs generally depends upon their build and pace. Whereas a solidly built boy may be chosen to play three-quarter or half in one of the lower games—that is to say, when he reaches that stage where games are on an organised footing—it is seldom that a slow boy, whether solid or slight, is chosen for any back position. But, as a rule, whether he is a fast or a slow runner the solid person usually finds his name among the eight rather than seven. This is, in a general kind of way, a good thing, since the scrum is the proper place for thew and sinew, the back division for wire and whipcord. On the other hand, organisers of the lower games make a serious mistake if they compel a solid youth, who also has real pace, to go into the scrum merely because he is solid. If there is any vacancy among the three-quarters such a youngster should at least be given a prolonged trial, for choice on the wing, in the three-quarter line. A heavy wing who can run fast is a genuine "terror" in an inter-school fray, and it is possible that our school coaches do not pay quite enough attention to this.

In a rough-and-ready sort of way the sixteen who finish last in a 50yds. race should be divided up to form in the two scrums of a lower game, the players and organiser of which were complete strangers until they met to pick sides. It rarely happens that a junior games master is placed in such a position, but if he is it will pay him best to get his two sides to face each other in that way. After a game or two he will be able to play general post and sort his players to the best advantage, moving some of the faster runners originally in his back division into the scrum, and *vice versa*. The demand in first-class football to-day is for forwards to be about as fast as their backs; but inasmuch as the whole thirty for our lower game cannot all be of the same fleetness, the above will, I think, be found to be a fair working plan to begin with.

The first thing to be forgotten by any boy aspiring to the highest honours in the forward game is anything he may have heard or read on the subject of a special place in the scrum for each player. The best forward is, in the long run, he who can fit in and play well anywhere. Of course, the ideal scrum is that which consists of Kempson, the centre front rank man, with

A heavy wing who can run fast is a genuine terror in a school match.

Cary-Elwes and Phillpotts on either side of him *every* time the scrum forms down. Behind him Adams and MacEwan are never missing from the second row, while Cor y-Smith has his arms round the waists of Combes and Ireson, the two fast forwards, who are the outside men of the back row. But only once in a lifetime do you get a school scrum consisting of Kempson, Cary-Elwes, Phillpotts, Adams, MacEwan, Corry-Smith, Combes, and Ireson, and even then it is a very difficult matter for them to be *ready to be in position* in the case of every scrum.

So, the young forward who is at some pains to cultivate the art of shoving his head down instantly wherever he happens to be and *to get on with the game* will stand the best chance, whether he wears red stockings or not, at the 'Varsity and, after that, in the toughest of all footer. I know that at many schools they do not teach this method, but I tell those school coaches who insist on special positions for their forwards, flatly, that they are wrong, that they are slowing down the Rugby game, and, worse than that, are teaching their charges *in direct antagonism to the true spirit of the game.*

It is grossly unfair to the opponent to *make* his forwards wait while your "specialists" get into position, and if I refereed an inter-school match I should severely penalise, from the second attempt onwards, all efforts to form down in a previously arranged way. Should such an attempt be made by the defending side, quite close to their goal-line, I would, after one warning, award a penalty try to the attacking side which had been made to wait and thus robbed of a try by *unfair tactics.*

The keynote of success in the forward game is to "*watch the ball.*" Keep your eye on the ball, is as golden a rule in Rugger as it is in cricket—I won't mention golf, owing to its unhealthy character as a pastime for boys. When you cannot watch the ball keep your ears open (don't wear scrum caps, a mere affectation this) for the voice of your scrum captain, or the boy nearest the ball in the scrum whose duty it is to keep his fellows informed as to the whereabouts of the ball. Unless you know where the ball is you cannot know on what point to push, or, when the ball is out of the scrum, the instant you must break away and get to work on defensive business. If you are pushing in any but the right direction you *are helping your opponents* to win the game. If you do not break away from the scrum instantly to join in the defence you are giving the opposing backs just that valuable moment of time which means all the difference between a try made and a try frustrated. Therefore, let watching the ball in the scrum be the first rule of all forward play.

Getting the ball in the scrum is next—some would say first—in importance. This is done in a variety of ways, some of them not to be mentioned here in a magazine read by gentlemen. Not all of the task of getting the ball falls on the forwards. The scrum-half plays his part here by timing his throw of the ball into the scrum to suit his shouted direction to his forwards as to which side of the scrum he is putting the ball in. If

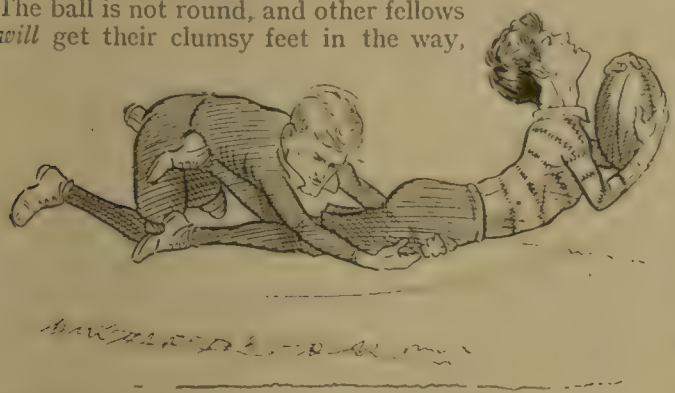
Every type of tackling, from the smothering a three-quarter, is included

the ball is fairly put in the scrum—not an easy matter this, even for a scrupulously honest player—the task of getting it, which we call "hooking," devolves on the front rank *only so far as actual footwork goes.* But they cannot give of their best unless their comrades help them by a perfectly timed and sustained shove forward as the ball is put in. So that success in the art of hooking is not necessarily individual. A really clever "hooker" can, of course, do with less assistance from his fellows than is needed by a dunderhead, but, for consistent success, the scrum of eight *must work as one player.*

Strictly speaking only the centre man of the front row may hook. Because the ball is not legally "in" the scrum until *it has passed* one player on either side. (*Vide* the rulings of the International Board.

which rulings ought to, but, sad to relate, do not, carry the same force in the world of Rugger that is held by the "interpretations" of the laws of cricket which the M.C.C. publish in pamphlet form—and to which all cricketers defer.) As, in our ideal scrum, *any one* of the eight players may find himself centre man of the front row in any scrum, it behoves *every one* of the eight to strive his utmost to learn how to "hook." Every forward should be compelled to practise the art both in and out of match-play, but match-play is the best of all practice whatever the game.

Similarly, every forward should practise the art of quick and accurate heeling. It is a very difficult matter indeed to stand on one leg in a swaying scrum which is, perhaps, being pushed back, and to heel the ball with any approach to accuracy. The ball is not round, and other fellows *will* get their clumsy feet in the way,



tackle at the line-out to the knee-to-hip tackle at in the game of a forward.

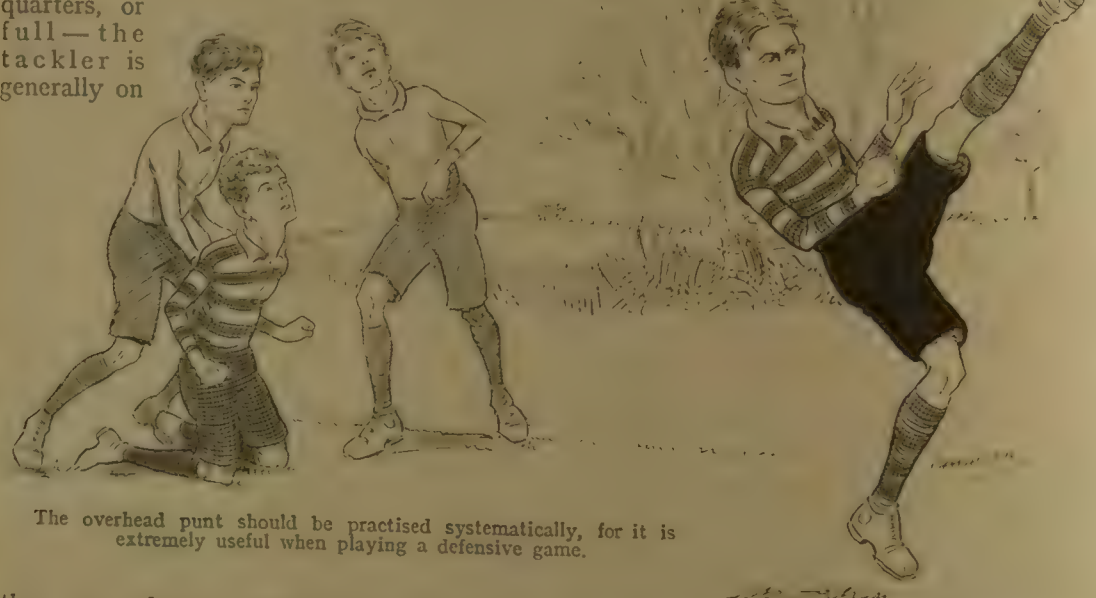
and thus what ought to have been a quick "heel" ends in the ball trickling out, or dallying in the back row because that row is engaged, as it thinks, in doing all the resisting work, to do which its six feet must all be firmly dug into the turf. Each one of the back row three thinks the scrum will collapse if he lifts a foot for heeling purposes, and so the poor scrum half gets none! Or, if he gets it, it is generally just in time to be too late.

As to the formation of the scrum much difference of opinion exists. The general one is 3, 2, 3. The United Services and the South Africans are strong believers in 3, 3, 2. The New Zealanders, playing eight backs, form down 2, 3, 2. But for boys 3, 2, 3 is the safest to adopt, and, as a general rule, it is wiser for schools to learn how to play the forward game and *not to waste their time with fancy formations*, any of which can be learnt in half a dozen games after leaving school, provided the player has *really mastered the rudiments of how to play forward.* Not one boy in fifty knows much about these rudiments, if the form in the Freshmen's games at the 'Varsities or that of the new arrivals in club football is a fair criterion.

After scrum-play study come the very necessary art of control of the ball with either foot, and tackling power. It is, indeed, difficult to assert that tackling and dribbling are not just as important as any other branch of forward play, but I have dealt with the "tight" work first. The only way to learn to dribble is—to dribble. It is not open to us to say the feet should be placed here and the hands there, and so on. The boy must just work out his own salvation, realising from the start that he must practise *incessantly*. It is a very good thing to practise in couples up and down the pitch, for that is the type of dribbling most needed in Rugger. I do not hold that an occasional game of Soccer is of any real use to a boy who is aiming at Twickenham, Inverleith, Cardiff Arms Park, or Lansdowne Road. For one thing, dribbling with a Soccer ball is twice, at least, as easy as the same performance with a Rugger oval, and the passing and footwork in Soccer is also of a different type for that reason, also because the chief mode of checking it is not the same in both games. Constant dribbling practice ought to be in the curriculum of every budding Rugger forward. How often is this the case? Instead, one hears of incessant scrum-practice, good enough in its way, but not by any means the entire hog.

Tackling practice can only be had in matches. There is no such thing as "friendly" tackling practice—to borrow from Soccer's hideous vocabulary. The tackler in Rugger, to be any use to his side, is, for the instant, the deadliest enemy on earth of the tacklee. Inasmuch as the forward gets more tackling to do than any other member of the fifteen, it behoves the would-be Daniel, Hammond, Monteith, Hodges, or Seeling to lose no opportunity to get all the match practice he can, and in every match not to spare himself any effort the exertion of which will help to improve his tackling. Every type of

tackling from the smothering tackle at the line-out to the genuine hard low knee-to-hip high tackle at a three-quarter going full pelt for the line is included to a greater degree in the game of a forward than in that of any back. For instance, no back has such a series of standing tackles to do as all forwards have to do at the line-outs. The standing tackle needs a great amount of sturdiness and of wrestling ability on the part of the tackler. He has to down his man as well as to prevent him from passing the ball or from running with it—and this without the advantage of impetus on his part gained by running. In the case of the majority of tacklers by backs—whether half, three-quarters, or full—the tackler is generally on the move when he lays violent hands on the tacklee. But our forward is handicapped by having to tackle standing still, and a great handicap it is.



The overhead punt should be practised systematically, for it is extremely useful when playing a defensive game.

The secret of success in tackling is to down your man *by going down with him.* Remember that *always.* The tackler who, for a timorous, or any other reason, attempts only to fling his victim down with a swing when it is a running tackle, or by sheer strength when it is at the line-out, will more often fail than succeed. Some players there have been who were strong enough to throw their opponents about and keep their feet themselves, but such have been very rare, and the tip I have given in *italics* is the best for boys to make a habit of. I have seen Lieut.-Commander G. H. D'O. Lyon, R.N., Captain Basil Maclear, and C. Seeling, of the 1905 New Zealand team, more than once floor two or three men in rapid succession, and keep on the run themselves, but even their efforts were akin to the four sixers and two fours in one over that a batsman hits but once in a lifetime. The best one can say of it is that it is possible to bowl your victim over and thus put him out of action *pro tem.*, while you remain on your feet and so enable your team to number fifteen against fourteen until your victim gets up and joins in the attack again. But inasmuch as the ball will generally by this time be far beyond your reach, you may just as well have done the job thoroughly by accompanynig your victim to Mother Earth.

One of the most important parts of a forward's duty is at the line-out from touch. In this the first business of every forward is to "mark" one opponent. *Every* forward is to blame if *one* opponent is unmarked. One of the eight cannot have failed to note the unmarked opponent, so that the moment a forward sees one of his opponents unmarked it is his business to go and mark him himself, or to point out to one of his own side that such and such a forward is unmarked. "Marking" a forward at the

line does not consist in merely standing alongside him in a friendly kind of way as though to ask him what he had for lunch. "Marking" properly carried out consists in not permitting the player "marked" to do anything of use to his side.

The *best* way to accomplish this is to prevent him from getting the ball either (1) by jumping for and getting it yourself, or (2) knocking it away before it reaches him. Once he has got it you must floor him, or so smother him by holding him round the body *and arms* that he cannot pass the ball; but you are at fault *if he gets the ball at all.* How often one sees a forward at a line-out crouching low beside an opponent in case he gets the ball. *That* is *not* the best way to prevent a side from gaining at the line-out. It is better than doing nothing, and that is about all that can be said for it. *The* thing to do is to prevent any opponent from catching the ball at all.

But line-out play is not all defensive by any means. There is, however, one other defensive act to which I must refer here. In your own twenty-five *when* your side is playing a defensive game—it will not always be doing so—you must learn to catch the ball and run with it *towards your own goal-line obliquely* in order to acquire the necessary space wherein to punt for touch almost directly over your head. Only two or three steps are needed followed by a short sharp kick which, if properly done, is a sure way of gaining from five to fifteen yards, and which no opponent can frustrate. This overhead punt should be systematically practised by forwards at punt-about.

Now as to attack from the line-out. This is done mainly by prearrangement with your half and three-quarters, but in a *combined* team the halves and threes are all wideawake for any pass from any forward at a line-out who deems it necessary to catch the ball and fling it, two-handed, in one continuous action to whichever of his backs is best situated to do something useful with it. The forward will have noticed, while waiting for the ball to be thrown in, which back is so situated.

Every schoolboy has heard of the "working the gap" trick, so I will not waste space by going into details about it here, but will allude to a ruse occasionally, but all too infrequently, tried. This is in your own twenty-five when all the opposing three-quarters are lying well back and it is your throw-in. *All* your forwards must *quickly*, and with some fuss and ostentation, crowd close to the touch-line, while by act and voice all of your team in the vicinity must make believe that the ball is to be thrown in at most a yard or two. All this must be done *very* quickly in order to give the opposition backs no time in which to come up to "mark" your centres. Then your half flings the ball as far in as he can, even to your wing player (if he can throw straight so far), with the result that if the ruse is successful your three-quarter line is set in motion with plenty of space in which to start a most telling run. There is nothing new about this move, only it is worth cultivating more than it is.

Indeed, there is nothing new about any particular move in Rugger. We have seen them all hundreds of times; some in another coat, perhaps, but not unrecognisable for all that. If boys will *ground* themselves on the above lines they will come to no harm if they intend to play forward. I do not presume to have said everything that it is possible for forwards to do, but enough, I hope, for those who are learning the game to enable them to be useful members of Rugger society both at and after leaving school; remembering always that everything depends upon the brain application and ability of the player. Nobody can make an international forward out of a pillar post-box.

(In his next article Mr. Sewell will deal with back-play and tactics generally.)

"Please to Remember—"

A FIFTH OF NOVEMBER ADVENTURE

By RICHARD BIRD

Illustrated by Ernest Prater

THE Old Man gathered the folds of his gown about him and rose. Pausing for all shuffling of feet to die away, he stood, an impressive figure upon the platform in Big School. Dipcote waited, considering idly whether he was going to announce an extra "half" in honour of some hypothetical scholarship won lately by an O.D. They were speedily satisfied—or, rather, the reverse.

"A week from to-day," said the Old Man, "the Fifth of November comes round. As you know, it is usually celebrated by unofficial—strictly unofficial—fireworks. This year the school, as such, will have nothing to do with fireworks. Representations have been made to me by a number of parents. They believe that fireworks manipulated by several hundreds of boys can be a source of considerable danger. I am bound to say that I agree with them. Now this is the first year of my headship, and I should like you to know that I am sorry to put down an old-established custom. You know that all good traditions and customs I heartily support, but this is a custom which I feel strongly ought not to continue. Therefore please understand that fireworks, in any shape or form, are strictly forbidden. Instead, there will be a procession of illuminated boats manned by the school crews. There will also be a bonfire afterwards. Lock-up that night will be at eight o'clock instead of six, and there will be no preparation."

He sat down, and the school filed out from morning prayers to discuss the innovation. There was, of course, a certain amount of grumbling, for most schoolboys are conservatives, hating all departure from tradition. Besides, fireworks were good sport, and only asses could conceive of possible danger. But against this it was recognised that the Old Man had been quite decent in his efforts to soften the blow. The illuminated procession ought to be fun, and the official bonfire ripping. On the whole, the pronouncement was received very well. Three junior members of Dipcote—to wit, Jeddart, Stubbs, and Hathaway—were among the malcontents.

"Beastly rot!" growled Jeddart as they were walking over to the Third Form. "See what comes of bringing in a new man. Old Boothby would never have listened to a million parents, even if they'd foamed at the mouth."

"And I'd been saving up for weeks!" echoed Stubbs dolefully. "Think of all the girdle-cakes I might have eaten, if I hadn't hoarded my dibs for fireworks!"

"Regular old woman!" was Hathaway's contribution. "Are you chaps going to do as he says?"

"I suppose we'll have to," said Stubbs. "Not much fun if we're caught with squibs in our possession. The Old Man can lick."

"What's your notion, Hath?" asked Jeddart.

"Well . . . nothing startling. But I don't see why we shouldn't buy some and let them off on our own in secret. If we went, say, up to the Top Ground——"

"Too near. We'd be heard."

"Well, anywhere, then, about a mile off. If we went to Peterson's field on a 'half' we could let off some squibs and things without being spotted. It would score off the Old Man."

"Mustn't have rockets or Roman candles," said the wise Jeddart. "We'd have to buy things that keep on the ground."

"It sounds rather a notion," said Stubbs, cheering up. "I think I'll let those girdle cakes wait."

The result of this and other consultations was that Messrs. Jeddart, Stubbs, and Hathaway expended four-and-sixpence on the purchase of the forbidden fruit. With a mistaken idea that they were "scoring off the Old Man," they hoarded their treasures for no less than three days. Human endurance could go no farther. Besides, that year the Fifth was not on a half-holiday: to-day was. Why wait longer? The fireworks must be set off on a

half and in the daytime—a second best, it was true, but better than nothing. Everything pointed to to-day.

At half-past two, therefore, Jeddart and his friends shirked football and made their way by devious paths to Peterson's field, bearing their precious burden. They reached the predetermined spot at a quarter past three—a remote field where surely they would never be spotted—where no shadow of explosive sound could reach the ears of those in authority. With considerable unction they set about the illegal and strictly private display. All went merrily at first—the Catherine wheels spun excellently, the squibs and crackers leaped and banged with heartsome fervour; the Bengal lights were splendid. Everything went smoothly, until Stubbs by an error of judgment, held on to a "billy-bomb" a second too long. It went off in his hand, and a series of anguished howls rent the air. He danced about wringing the injured member, while Jeddart and Hathaway, pale with fear, pursued him with urgent sympathy, begging him "not to be an ass!"

Stubbs held on to a "billy-bomb" a second too long, and a series of agonised howls rent the air.

When he had recovered a little from the first throes, he allowed them to examine. There was a blackened burn, which looked as if the "tumult and the shouting" had been justified.

"Looks rotten," said Jeddart, wagging a physician's head. "You'll have to show it to the mut."

"And get twug at once, and reported to the Head! Not likely!"

"It looks perfectly beastly," corroborated Hathaway. "It must be the 'mut,' old chap. Suppose it started to fester?"

Stubbs paled. He had read gruesome accounts of battles, where sometimes, after wounds, "mortification set in." Was this to be his fate? After

some further argument he allowed himself to be persuaded—the more easily in that the pain was by this time as much as he could bear with a fairly decent composure. But even in this dire necessity the heroic soul of Stubbs took thought for others. If he agreed to tell the "mut" and have his wound dressed, he stipulated that he must go alone. There was no earthly need for three people to get lagged. His faithful coadjutors protested.

"We're all in it," said Jeddart. "It's not fair that you should face the enemy by yourself. We'll back you up."

"Of course," echoed Hathaway. "We're not skunks."

"Rot!" said the hero. "I'm bound to be twug, but that's no reason why you should. Listen to me: if you don't keep dark, I swear I'll not show this to the 'mut.' And if I don't, you say yourselves the place may go bad. I might die before the morning. How would you like that?"

They had only a very dim fear that things would go so far, but they knew that Stubbs was a determined fellow who would stick to his word. Loth to desert him, honestly anxious to bear their share and stand in with him, at length they were overcome. Stubbs went alone to the matron. "I've had an accident, Mrs. Pethick," he said, and that was all. The matron inspected the wound. It looked nasty, and she telephoned for the doctor to dress it at once. He came, shook his head, with a "H'm! . . . a little before the Fifth, isn't it?" and forced a partial, unwilling confession from the reluctant Stubbs. Yes . . . he had had some fireworks; but of his friends' share he said nothing. Not even when he was bound up and established for a week's rest in the school sanatorium, face to face with the Old Man, did he relax. The Old Man said little—it was no time for recrimination—but he gave Stubbs to understand that he would require a fuller explanation when he reappeared in society. The wounded law-breaker lapped beef-tea and custard in apprehensive silence.

II

Dipcote Sanatorium stood about a quarter of a mile away from the school, built half-way up a hillside. On the fifth of November Jeddart and Hathaway obtained permission to visit their afflicted friend to cheer his solitary heart. They found him still in bed—the wound was rather slow in healing—still pale, and extremely bored. After the door was shut and no fear of eavesdropping nurses or matrons remained, Jeddart asked if there were any further developments. Stubbs shook his head.

"The Old Man comes in regularly, but he's kept off the subject so far. I expect he's saving it up."

"He *can't* be beast enough to cane you when you come out," said Jeddart, hopefully.

"I don't know," returned Stubbs. "He might . . . but don't let's talk about it. Tell me what's going on. I'm fed-up with lying in here."

"The bonfire's building," said Hathaway, with zest. "It's going to be an A1 affair—heaps of tar-barrels and brushwood and things."

"Where's it going to be?"

"On that bit of waste ground at the back of the gym."

"Dash!" said Stubbs, his face falling. "I'd hoped it would be somewhere in front of the school. Then I could have seen it from the san. windows."

"'Fraid there's no chance of that."

"You'll see the glow in the sky," suggested Jeddart. "That will be something."

"The glow in the beastly sky!" said Stubbs, scornfully. "What earthly good is that?"

"I suppose," said Hathaway, "you won't be allowed out?"

Stubbs shook his head.

"Not a dog's chance. I'm not to get up till the day after to-morrow. Even if I wanted to, I couldn't. The 'mut' comes in every evening and reads to me. It's awfully decent of her, of course, but——"

"They say," interrupted Jeddart, "that the illuminated boat procession will be rather hot stuff. But I suppose you can't get a sight of the river from here."

Stubbs sighed and shook his head. "The trees are in between. No; I must just make up my mind to a dull evening. It's rotten luck."

"Rotten!" agreed his friends, and soon afterwards they left.

The plight of Stubbs affected them painfully. It seemed a shame that they should go scot-free while he lay alone and suffering in the san. Yet what could they do? Confession had been negatived by his heroic action; perforce they must sit and let events take their course.

"It seems mean," said Hathaway, as they walked away, "for us to be enjoying ourselves to-night, while poor old Tubby lies there doing nothing and seeing nothing. Isn't there a thing we could do?"

"Do you mean that out of decency we ought

to stop away from the boat procession and the bonfire? That wouldn't do him any good."

"I suppose not. If only he could *see* something, it wouldn't be so bad."

"Well, we can't cut down the trees that hide the boat procession—"

"And we can't persuade them to unbuild the bonfire and have it opposite the san.——"

"No. But——" Jeddart stopped abruptly, as if a sudden idea had occurred to him. "I say, Hath., there *is* something we might do! It's a bit risky, but with care I think it might be managed. Are you game?"

"Rather. Let's hear."

"It's only a rough idea as yet," returned Jeddart. "It will need some thinking out. But there's not much time to lose. It's half-past two now, and the bonfire is at seven."

"Four and a half hours," said Hathaway, after a rapid calculation. "Come on to the study, and we'll talk it over."

As a result of the conference, Messrs. Hathaway and Jeddart might have been observed emerging half an hour later from their house.

Helped by a parting kick, the flaming barrel rolled in fiery splendour down the hill—but not along the course intended by the juniors.

They had an expression of exaggerated innocence, even of mystery. They proceeded with ostentatious carelessness until they arrived at the "bit of waste ground at the back of the gym." Here they paused to survey the scene.

One or two of the younger masters, together with the school porter and half a dozen of the prefects—all in the oldest clothes they could muster—were building the famous bonfire. A splendid foundation of tarry barrels, grouped round a stout pole some 15ft. high (which served as a core), was being covered and heaped about with brushwood, chance timber, broken chairs, and any other combustible material that presented itself. The *pièce de résistance* was surrounded by a crowd of interested idlers, for to-day there had

been no football. The place, in short, was thronged.

"Blow!" said Jeddart, disappointed. "I hoped they'd have finished by this time."

"So did I," observed Hathaway. "This is hopeless. There is no chance of doing anything before school with all these chaps about."

"Well, let's move round and find out the lie of the land."

In the process of moving they came across an empty barrel being rolled along towards its ultimate doom. Following its erratic course, they saw it delivered over to the porter. He was in charge of the tar-bucket. With an iron ladle he poured a copious libation on and about the empty barrel after it had been fixed in place upon the pile. Jeddart and Hathaway watched with fascinated eyes.

"Where do those barrels come from?" asked Jeddart.

"Broken and disused, from the brewery," said the porter, briefly. "There's some more coming up on a lorry in a few minutes."

Jeddart nudged Hathaway and drew him aside. In the fulness of time the lorry appeared. A crowd of willing helpers swarmed about, eager to unload. And of those helpers, who so eager as Messrs. Hathaway and Jeddart? With panting bosoms and no unnecessary word they secured a barrel and began to roll it along. . . . But not towards the bonfire! They pulled a barrel down on the side of the lorry farthest away from the crowd, untouched, unnoticed. While the driver was repelling boarders on the near side, shouting and gesticulating, the horse shied mildly, frightened at the tumult. The driver lost his footing and stumbled to the earth. He was not hurt. In the subsequent laughter and confusion, Hathaway and Jeddart rolled their prize away. Luckily the gym. was open; only a few panting yards had to be covered. Once inside its friendly shelter they stowed their prize in the changing-room, covered it hastily with sweaters and blazers that hung on the pegs, and took further counsel.

"We can't leave it here!" said Hathaway.

"We *must*," said Jeddart. "The bell will go in a few minutes for school. Anyhow, it's too risky to roll it out in the open again. Nobody is likely to be in this afternoon or evening—they'll be too keen on the boats and the fire. We'll just leave it covered up and chance it. We *daren't* do anything else. Now, let's hurry back and spy out the land."

They spied it out successfully. During the ten minutes that remained of freedom they saw the porter consult his watch.

"I must ring the bell, sir," he said to the master directing operations, "in a very few minutes. I think there's enough tar on now, and I'd better put away some of the things."

The master nodded. The conspirators saw the porter carry some of his paraphernalia towards the gym. They followed, ostensibly to recover a blazer, and saw him go into the furnace-room. Here, then, was to be stored the tar! Jeddart kept *cave* while this operation was in process; Hathaway unfastened the latch of a window—unfastened the *latch*, but did not open the sash. They left the gym. in due course, their last backward glance showing them the porter locking the door. Officially, the gym. was not to be used again before the morrow. But Hathaway and Jeddart were not officials. With a covert grin they repaired to their class-room for the afternoon's work.

III

On ordinary days work lasted from four to six. To-day, by special decree of the Old Man, the final bell was to go half an hour earlier. Tea was to be similarly advanced, being "served" directly after school. The procession of illuminated boats was timed for 6.15, the bonfire three-quarters of an hour later. During tea there was a babel of voices discussing the impending events. Jeddart and his friend took little interest or hand in the speculations and criticisms freely exchanged. They made their usual good tea, however, in spite of a feeling of tense excitement. Six o'clock found them hovering about their study, anxious and constrained.

"Surely it's time," observed Hathaway, consulting his watch. "The house must be empty. If the procession is to start at quarter past, I expect everybody will have gone down to the bank long ago."

"We'll give 'em ten minutes," decreed Jeddart, steeling himself to patience. "There may be a few servants loitering about."

"There's sure to be some, anyhow. You can bet they won't leave Dipcote deserted."

"We've got to chance that, you know; but there's no need to run more risks than we can help."

"There'll be an awful row if we're twug," said Hathaway, after two minutes' uneasy pacing of the study. "The Old Man won't be gratified at all."

"It's in a good cause," Jeddart reminded

him. "Think of poor old Tubby bored to death in the san."

"If all goes well," returned Hathaway with a brightening countenance, "he won't be bored very long."

Slowly the minutes passed. At length even Jeddart, that cautious general, was satisfied that the time for action had arrived. Quietly in the gathering dusk they left the study and the house. Emptiness met them in the corridors—not a servant or a master was to be seen. Emptiness met them in the road—not a pupil of Dipcote could be observed. All, save the few servants on duty (and probably stationed at the upper windows!), had gone to the river banks to see the procession of boats.

Without speaking Jeddart and Hathaway steered a silent course in the direction of the gym. Arrived there, they scouted about a few minutes to make sure they were unobserved. Satisfied at last, Jeddart offered a back. Hathaway climbed on it, pushed open the window they had unlatched, and made a surreptitious entry. Helped by his friendly arm and a convenient spout, Jeddart followed. For a moment they listened painfully—no sound! Thence to the changing-room on noiseless feet. Hurrah! the barrel had not been discovered! It still lay *perdu* under the covering screen of clothes. They disinterred it, and bore it silently to the window. Then Jeddart climbed down. Standing below the window he helped to ease its descent. There was some noise as it scraped its way down the wall, and again they listened. . . . Still no sound of approaching enemies. Jeddart waited on guard, while his co-partner made a return journey to the furnace-room. He came back swiftly with the bucket of tar. This he passed down to his friend, and speedily followed. For the last time they paused to listen. The coast was still clear!

They put the bucket inside the barrel. Then, as silently as possible, they bore the barrel between them on its final journey. It was an anguished proceeding, evocative of groans and blisters, for such a burden is not the easiest thing in the world to carry. Rolling, despite Hathaway's weak pleading, was forbidden by Jeddart. They must make *no* noise! After twenty minutes of unremitting effort the conspirators found themselves close to the sanatorium. They paused for breath and a whispered consultation.

After a moment they resumed the painful journey. Skirting the san., Jeddart helped Hathaway with the barrel some fifty yards beyond. Leaving the precious freight under his partner's charge, he returned and stood opposite a window in which a light burned. He took a few small pebbles and threw them sharply against the glass. Jeddart was ready to run, in case Mrs. Pethick came. But she was having her tea, as he had anticipated. Instead of the matron, the pyjamaed form of Stubbs appeared. He threw up the sash, and cried: "Who's there?"

"*Hush!*" hissed Jeddart, and Stubbs obeyed in wonder. Followed the one word "Watch!" Stubbs got a dressing-gown and took post.

Jeddart returned to Hathaway. Between them, amid sighs and almost tears, they gained the crest of the hill. Here they paused, shook hands in dramatic thankfulness for perils escaped and the triumph so near at hand. In silence they ladled tar upon the barrel, and anointed its interior with liberal charity. Jeddart borrowed an armful of hay from a neighbouring rick, and stuffed the barrel comfortably. Then, more tar. Then a brief pause before the final scene.

The san., you remember, was half-way down the hillside; the hill dipped steeply towards the river; no road that might hold wayfarers lay between—there was a clear run. Jeddart, Hathaway, and the barrel were poised alone upon the crest. Everybody who mattered was watching the procession. Hathaway held the barrel back upon the summit; Jeddart applied a match to the hay; Hathaway contributed, a moment later, a parting kick. And behold! the great act of unselfishness was in being! Stubbs should not be wholly cut off from loyal celebrations.

The idea, of course, was that the blazing barrel should roll in fiery splendour down the hillside, and eventually into the river. The idea! But half-way down the plan suffered an involuntary change. The barrel bumped on a large projecting stone. Its course was deflected, and it dashed into the paling surrounding the sanatorium. Just at that moment Mrs. Pethick emerged, intent on summoning from the wilds a truant cat. She saw the flaming portent strike the fence—she saw the fence begin to catch fire—she realised the possibility of the san., herself, and patient going up in a sheet of flame, and—

"*E-e-e-e-ech-h-h!*" said Mrs. Pethick.

On the top of the hill Jeddart and Hathaway clung to each other in helpless terror. They had not meant this—oh, no! Indeed, indeed they had not meant this! They had intended to watch the flaming barrel roll, and then

peacefully melt into the horizon before a search could be made. Luckily, one person kept his wits about him, and that person was Stubbs.

He had been at the window all the time, and had watched the barrel begin its mad career with delighted zest. The check, the blazing fence, the shriek of Mrs. Pethick, roused him to take a more serious view of things. Force of habit made him glance round the room for water; in the same moment he knew a trick worth two of that. His enforced seclusion had resulted in his knowing the san. bedroom pretty thoroughly. With a bound he reached to one corner, and seized from the wall a portable extinguisher. He knew how these things worked!

Twelve seconds later Mrs. Pethick saw a figure in a flying dressing-gown quelling the flames with an imperturbable stream. But a short while elapsed ere they were out, and then at last she could say safely: "Master Stubbs, get back to bed this *minute!*"

And that is why the Old Man, not unmindful of Stubbs's heroic presence of mind, made no further tactless allusions to the scarred hand and surreptitious fireworks.

No: Hathaway and Jeddart did not remember to return the bucket.

THE END

THE WISDOM OF THE ANCIENTS

"Look, grandpa! An aeroplane!"

"'Tain't an aereoplane. An aereoplane's filled with air, same as a balloon, and a monoplane 'as one wing and a biplane 'as two. So that's a biplane."

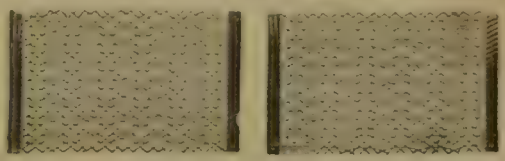
THE STAMPS OF ALSACE-LORRAINE

WHEN the German armies overran France in the great war of 1870 one of the most important results (to the stamp collector) was the issue of postage stamps by the "Army of Occupation" for use at the various French post offices that were held by the German invaders. These stamps, rightly or wrongly, have always been known among philatelists as the stamps of Alsace-Lorraine. It is not an ideal description, because they were used also in other provinces of France, but the fact that they were first used in Alsace and Lorraine, and remained current there for a longer period than in other quarters, coupled with the cession of these provinces to Germany in 1871, has had the effect of identifying the stamps more particularly with Alsace and Lorraine. Any exact definition of the issue would be a long and tedious business. One specialist, for instance, holds that they ought to be styled "German stamps issued in France by the Army of Occupation." Prodigious! Please picture to yourself a poor philatelist entering a stamp-shop and requesting to be shown a selection of the German stamps issued in France by the Army of Occupation. No! "Alsace-Lorraine" is a quite good enough name for them, and I predict that stamp collectors will go on calling them the stamps of Alsace-Lorraine to the end of the chapter.

An Alsace-Lorraine stamp issued in 1870.

There has, by the way, been a threat that history would repeat itself in this direction—that a new German "Army of Occupation" would inflict German-made stamps upon the people of Brussels, Louvain (if there are any people left alive in Louvain), Ligée, Namur, and other Belgian cities. This would create a new problem in philatelic nomenclature, but quite probably the threat will never materialise.

For a long time the exact date of the first issue of the stamps of Alsace-Lorraine was a matter of doubt, but it is now generally accepted that September 6th, 1870, was the first day of their currency. It has sometimes been stated that the stamps were issued primarily for the use of the German Army, but that is quite a mistake. The correspondence of the soldiery would be forwarded by the military authorities. The issue of these stamps was simply a part of the invader's plan to Germanise the territory they covered, just as they have been attempting recently to Germanise gallant little Belgium by the publication of newspapers printed in German, by the altering of Belgian clocks to synchronise with German time, and by various other means. Whenever and wherever a French post office came under the control of the conquering Teutons in 1870-71, this system of Germanisation was at once set in motion. The French stamps were suppressed, and superseded by the labels made in Germany.



(*a*) (*b*)

Enlarged portions of the background of Alsace-Lorraine stamps, showing (*a*) the normal and (*b*) the inverted network

At first the use of the ordinary French cancelling stamps was continued, but as soon as practicable these also were exchanged for postmarkers of German manufacture.

To the German Government printing works at Berlin was entrusted the task of supplying the "Alsace-Lorraine" postage stamps, and the fact that they were wanted in a desperate hurry explains the extreme plainness of the design. The networked background was suggested by the stamps of the North German Confederation at that time in use in Prussia.

Printing this network in colour as a groundwork, and superimposing the inscriptions "Postes 1 Centime," "Postes 2 Centimes," etc., by a second printing, the works in Berlin were able to turn out supplies of these stamps with great rapidity.

The method of printing itself supplies a sufficient explanation of the errors "with inverted network." It occasionally happened that the sheets of paper already supplied with the background of network would be "fed" into the press for the second printing the wrong way round, and on these the network would have its curves pointing downwards instead of upwards, which was the normal style. The difference is quite a simple matter, but it seems to be a perennial source of perplexity to the young collector, so for the guidance of Captainites I give on the previous page enlarged reproductions of portions of two stamps—one the normal variety, and the other the "error of background."

There were only seven values, and all of them were low denominations—namely, 1, 2, 4, 5, 10, 20, and 25 centimes, the highest value being equivalent to 2½*d.* only. Philatelists were few in number in those days; otherwise we may be sure the Germans would have added a few franc values with a view to getting a little extra profit for the national war-chest by selling the stamps to collectors!

All the seven stamps of the set are known to exist with inverted network, but except for the 10 centimes value they are very scarce in this condition, and are not very likely to come the way of the young collector. Just to give an idea of the respective values of the ordinary stamps and the varieties with inverted net, let me quote the prices assigned to used specimens in one of the leading philatelic catalogues:—

I.—With Network Pointing Upwards.

1 centime,	green	7s. 6d.
2 centimes,	brown	12s.
4 ,,	grey	5s.
5 ,,	green	1s. 6d.
10 ,,	pale brown, etc. ..	6d. to 2s
20 ,,	pale ultramarine ..	5s.
20 ,,	deep ultramarine	1s. 6d.
25 ,,	dark brown ...	3s. 6d.

II.—With Network Pointing Downwards.

1 centime,	green	£3
2 centimes,	brown	£2
4 ,,	grey	12s.
5 ,,	green	£3
10 ,,	pale brown, etc....	1s. to 2s.
20 ,,	ultramarine ...	17s. 6d.
25 ,,	brown	27s. 6d.

It will be noted from the above that the 10 centimes value is almost as common with the inverted background as in the normal condition. This is explained by the colour used for this value, which varied from a pale brown to a kind of straw colour. In a printing works, especially when working under artificial light, it would be more difficult to detect any inversion of the network on such a weak colour as this, and hence the frequency with which the 10 centimes stamp is found with the "error of background."

Purposely I have quoted the values for used rather than unused specimens. In some cases these stamps are cheaper in unused than in used state, owing to the disposal of official remainders having been sold to the stamp dealers; in other instances, notably the 10 centimes in the pale brown shade, the unused are far scarcer than the used.

But to all young collectors a special note of warning is necessary in regard to unused specimens of Alsace-Lorraine, particularly when these unused copies have the inverted network. The reprints, or, rather, "official counterfeits," to give them their correct description, which were manufactured in 1885, were nearly all supplied with the points of the network downwards. A favourite means of distinguishing between the original stamps and these imitations is by the position of the letter "P" of the word "Postes." In the originals the "P" is only 2½ millimetres from the left border of the stamp; in the imitations the distance is 3 to 3½ millimetres. It is not only against unused stamps that this warning must be directed. Captainites must also be on their guard against apparently used specimens, for these may in some cases turn out to be the counterfeits with forged postmarks.

Two of the Alsace-Lorraine stamps, as we must continue to call them for want of a better name, were not issued until some seven weeks after the other values—namely, on October 28th, 1870. These were the 5 and 25 centimes. All remained in use in the French post offices under German control until March 24th, 1871, when, by agreement between the two nations, France fully resumed the administration of her own postal affairs except in the two provinces of Alsace-Lorraine. In these provinces the stamps continued in use until the end of the year 1871. In the meantime the German Empire had been founded, and the first imperial postage stamps of January 1st, 1872, superseded the separate issues for Prussia, Saxony, Hanover, etc., and also took the place of the stamps of Alsace and Lorraine, those unhappy provinces which suffered the further indignity of having their French names translated into German as "Elsass" and "Lothringen."

Perhaps it will not be long before France retakes her lost provinces; it is not impossible that it may happen before this number of The Captain reaches the reader's hands. What a revenge it would be for the French to issue "Occupation" stamps for their regained possessions—and possibly for parts of their enemies' territory as well! Then we should have another series matching the Alsace-Lorraine issue for historical interest, and equally difficult to classify.

"THE CAPTAIN"
WAR PORTFOLIO

Some of the Most Stirring Episodes of the War, depicted by Christopher Clark, Frank H. Mason, R.B.A., Lionel Edwards, and John A. Bryan

TO THE LAST!

In a fierce German attack one R.F.A. battery suffered so terribly that only one gun remained unsilenced. At this last gun all the men but one were out of action, but still that sole survivor continued at his work, and, single-handed, faced the enemy until he was ordered to retire

"IT WAS A

The German Fleet, during the first two months of the war, avoided all engagements they possibly could with fifteen trawlers, returned without loss to themselves! The two cruisers and

GLORIOUS VICTORY!"

Admiral Jellicoe's ships, but they made a brilliant raid on the North Sea Fishing Fleet, and, having sunk four destroyers proved themselves better fighters than the *Goeben*, anyway.

SEVEN DRAGOONS BEAT TWENTY-SEVEN UHLANS!

A scouting party of seven French Dragoons encountered a patrol of twenty-seven Uhlans, and, giving fight, utterly routed the enemy. For his gallantry in this encounter, Lieutenant Bruyant, who was in command of the Dragoons, was awarded the Cross of the Legion of Honour.

A DUEL IN THE AIR

Airships and aeroplanes are playing a great part in the war, and the British Flying Corps has earned unstinted praise. Our picture shows a monoplane sending a Zeppelin to destruction.

THE CHARGE OF THE SCOTS GREYS AND THE GORDON HIGHLANDERS

The Scots Greys have repeatedly been in the thick of the battle, and have won the admiration of friend and foe by their fearless fighting. At one charge, men of the Gordon Highlanders held on to their stirrup-leathers, so that they might get more quickly at close grips with the enemy.

THE BELGIANS FLOOD THEIR COUNTRY TO REPEL THE FOE

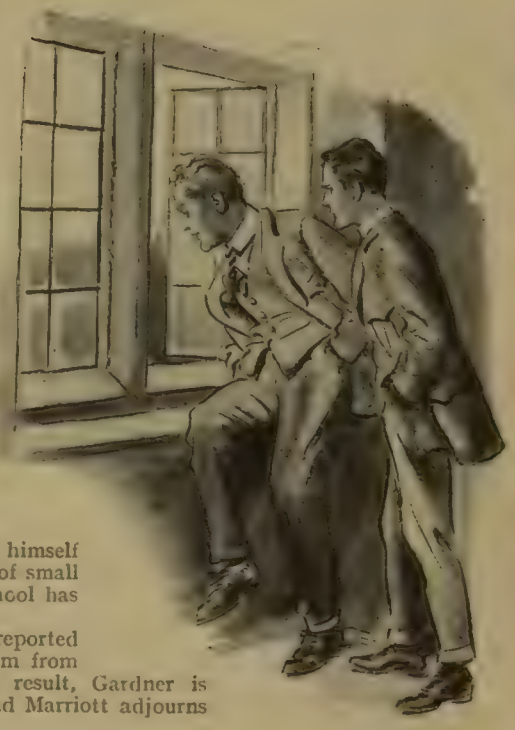
The great sacrifice the Belgians made in flooding their country near Antwerp cost the Germans dear in men and guns. The Kaiser's troops found it impossible to drag away their heavy artillery, and, in spite of their desperate attempts to do so under a heavy fire, they were compelled to abandon it.

WHO CARES?

A Public School Story

By HYLTON CLEAVER

Illustrated by H. M. Brock, R.I.



SYNOPSIS OF LAST MONTH'S INSTALMENT

JAMES ROSCOE enters Harley School, and is assigned to Godwin's house. He is a surly youth, ill-mannered, and entirely devoid of public spirit. He is made the joint fag of Symington and Menzies. Soon after his arrival he is found to have stolen chocolate from the village sweet-shop.

For this mean theft Roscoe receives a thrashing from Laing, the school captain, whom the head master has just transferred to Godwin's house, hitherto the most badly managed in the school.

Mr. Godwin objects to prefects in his house using the cane, and is angered to find that Laing intends to avail himself of the school rule which permits him to do so. Laing is of small stature, with wise-looking features, and throughout the school has a great reputation for sagacity.

Roscoe imagines that his theft of the chocolate was reported by a boy named Gardner, and in revenge he pulls a form from beneath this boy as he is about to sit down. As a result, Gardner is confined to the sanatorium for a few days, and his friend Marriott adjourns with Roscoe to a secluded spot to fight.

CHAPTER VII

THE SCRAP BY THE WORKSHOPS

MENZIES and Symington sat in room No. 12, face to face over a bag of biscuits, into which each dived repeatedly.

"And you told Laing," said Menzies, snappily, "that Lennox was copped last term?"

"Why not?" said Symington.

"You're an arrant ass. Priest let the thing drop. He just chin-wagged and nobody heard much about it. Laing'll make no end of a row about this. There's going to be trouble."

"Well," said Symington, mildly, "if there is, it doesn't affect you."

"*Doesn't it?* Does it occur to you that both these chaps were our fags? Do you know that Lennox nicked stuff regularly until he was caught? Doesn't it strike you as at all strange that our next fag gets copped in his first week? Where do you suppose, you ass, that he got the idea? If you take my advice you'll keep quiet about it. Doesn't it strike you that people will think that *we* may have sent him down there to get stuff, and suggested that, if he were smart over it, he might do himself a bit of good while he was down there?"

"No," said Symington, innocently; "why should they?"

"Bah!" said Menzies, furiously. "Go and bury your head in the coal-box! Come in!"

The casual tap of a man who is coming in anyhow, but wishes to be as courteous over it as he can, had sounded at the door; now Laing appeared and entered the study.

"Hullo!" said he. "I wanted a word with you two chaps."

Symington half got up with a sort of effort at civility, but, catching Menzies' eye, sat down again.

"Oh, yes," said he. "Have a biscuit? It's a new kind; they've got little animals on them."

"Not the verminous kind, I hope?" said Laing. "I've just had a call from Godwin."

"He been to see you?" asked Menzies.

"Yes; he burst in just as I was whacking a person called Roscoe. He's your fag, isn't he, by the bye?"

Menzies shifted uneasily in his chair.

"Yes," said he. "Yes."

"You'd better keep an eye on him. He's been nicking chocolate from Mrs. Kent already, and he's only been here a week. She told me when I was down in the village just now." He retold Mrs. Kent's story.

"I suppose you knew," said Symington, hesitatingly, "that Godwin doesn't like us lacing people."

"He warned me himself. Still, I told him to-day when he blew in that I couldn't captain a house with my most effective authority taken away, and referred him to the Head. He fairly foamed at the mouth. Said that it was a private, personal request from him to me—nothing to do with official rules. Said he should have thought I was gentleman enough to respect his wishes."

"What did you do?" asked Menzies.

"Oh, he went away at last, looking thoroughly miserable. Well, I've come round to tell you this, because I think you ought to know, as you're in authority. *You* can do what you like. You're entitled to whack if you want to, Symington. Still, if you don't like to do it, and can keep order without, that's your business. All I want to know is that you're able to put down some of this idiocy that's been going on in the house. Do it how you like, but do it justly and effectively. I want you to back me up."

"What's the idiocy that's been going on?" asked Menzies, a little sullenly.

"The house," said Laing, "is about the worst there is. Nobody seems keen, or disciplined, or anything. Dash it all, we don't want to make the place a blooming reformatory, but we do want to be up in line with the rest of the school. There seems too much jackassing about at night, for one thing. Then people seem to treat roll-call as a sort of World's Fair—buzzing things about, and shrieking, and all that. They needn't stand up in line like a lot of tin soldiers, but they've got to let a chap hear whether people answer their names or not. That's all on the surface, though. There's something queer going on underneath all that. At present I can't quite make out what it is. I fancy men get out at night as often as they like, and—however, that's got to be found out and stopped."

"Yes," said Symington, thoughtfully.

Menzies did not answer. He opened a book on the table, and commenced to glance casually through it.

"So," said Laing, "good afternoon. By the bye, I want both you men to turn out for the house against Canaby's in a friendly on Thursday."

"Righto!" said Symington, getting up. "So long!"

Menzies grunted, and Laing looked at him curiously, and went off down the corridor. He passed thoughtfully out of the house and across the playing fields towards the school itself; on the way he met Weldon, coming towards him.

"Hullo!" said the football captain. "I was just plodding over to find you. Matters seething with interest have cropped up."

"Financial matters?" asked Laing. "They usually 'seethe with interest,' don't they?"

"This flippancy," replied Weldon, "must now cease. Over there," he went on, taking Laing's arm, and pointing towards the workshops, "a curious scene is being enacted. I don't know whether your people are rehearsing an old-world scene for a pageant at Christmas, but it's certainly a sample of real old school life. At first I thought I'd stepped up against a cinema picture of 'Tom Brown's School Days' or something. Wonderful! Oh, great!"

"Keep to the point," said Laing, "if possible."

"Two youths," said Weldon, "have caused a crowd to collect. They are scrapping. As I passed it seemed to be a goodish sort of mill"

"Great Scott!" said Laing, starting off towards the scene. "Why on earth didn't you do something?"

"What could I do? Shake a pepper-pot between their noses, or bite their tails, or something? As a matter of fact I did think of leaping amongst them and clouting a few people indiscriminately, but then I found that they were all *your* little lads—all Godwinkles—and since you spoke quite recently of the various methods you proposed to adopt as various exigencies turned up, I thought I'd like to fetch you out, and throw you at them It was awfully exciting."

"Apparently," said Laing, "your duties with the football use up all your reserve of sense, if any. One of the kids has probably been savaged to death by now."

"You seem in a hurry," said Weldon, trying to keep pace with Laing. "Why not shout at them whilst you still have a bit of breath left?"

"Your suggestions irritate me," said Laing.

"I'm sorry for that. Shall I moan three times like a sick cow, then, or rush on and warn them of your coming, or stop behind and head off a few as you scatter them?"

But by this time they had reached the workshops, and Laing led the way cautiously round the corner of a shed. Before him he saw a ring of excited juniors, and in the middle Marriott and Roscoe battling, with rolled up shirt sleeves. It is said that fights at school are out

of date. Fights as organised entertainments for the school in general may be. Small unheard-of scraps between juniors are not. They occur quite often. They may be entered into on the spur of the moment, or arranged for at a convenient hour later. Anyway, they are certainly still popular, in their small, fierce way.

Such was this battle between Roscoe and Marriott. They had been kicking up the dust for perhaps ten minutes when Laing appeared with Weldon. Both prefects stood still, looking on quietly. The features of the combatants had not yet approached the unpleasant stage. However, a trickle of red was following a winding course from Roscoe's nose to his mouth, whilst Marriott's left cheekbone showed signs of some slight abrasion. Both boys were breathing heavily and going in whole-heartedly for long distance sparring, varied by occasional clinches during which with heads down they pummelled each other with immense vigour in the ribs.

"Great Scott!" said Laing, under his breath, "that little snake with the tapped claret is a new chap. Curiously enough I whacked him to-day. He seems to be getting off the mark here with an unpleasant flash, doesn't he?"

"Ugly enough," said Weldon.

"P'r'aps you don't recognise him. That's the creature you called the Mongrel Maggot."

"My word! So it is. Seems to go in rather for the pickaxe stroke, doesn't he? How about uttering the cry of some weird bird, and interfering, *à la* boy scout?"

"Do they seem to you," said Laing, "to be damaging each other?"

"What d'you mean?"

"I mean that the youth Roscoe—the Maggot—probably deserves all Marriott can give him. I fancy it may do him good. I'm inclined to pass by on the other side, so to speak."

Weldon grunted.

"I shouldn't blame you," said he. "I can never see why people shouldn't maul each other about if they want to, provided they make a decent sort of match. I thought p'r'aps it might upset your very obliging Mr. Godwin, that's all."

"He needn't know. After all it's for one performance only. I simply think that Roscoe wants all the lamming he can get, and if Marriott can give him a bit to go on with, well—this jury will not convict."

"Thus," remarked Weldon, as Marriott jumped in and basted Roscoe unmercifully about the ears.

Roscoe had gone into this fight with the sullen disinterest with which he regarded everything. He was no funk; but neither was he a fighter. If a scrap arose, he simply went into it as a matter of course, hoping to knock more pieces off the other man than he lost himself. He was not keen; he was not afraid. He just fought with a sort of stupid slap-bang fierceness, and he trusted to luck to give him the upper hand. Whether he hit above or below the belt did not really trouble him at all. He just whirled his fists, and took what he got. He was not getting the best of it, but he took all that came his way sullenly, and hoped for success for one of his own punches. This might have come, had not an unwelcome intruder just then done so instead.

Mr. Godwin suddenly made his second dramatic appearance that day. His eyes, cheeks, and moustache all adroop, he stumbled into the ring like a wounded cinema hero. He appeared to have been running. Speaking with difficulty and intense passion, his remarks were dimly understood to run somewhat on the following lines.

"It is disgraceful . . . scandalous . . . never before . . . I am outraged . . . the head master shall hear of . . . Laing you . . . I am disgusted . . . stop at once . . . give your names . . . stop talking immediately . . . never . . . vile and . . . ." Which, whilst it may have been quite a brilliant speech as intended, failed somewhat dismally to impress anybody with aught but its ludicrous side.

For awhile Mr. Godwin flashed his squint round the group whilst he hurled his disgust in all directions. Then he stepped up to Laing.

"I am horrified," said he, a little more coherently. "I am amazed. I saw this bestial scene from a window in Mr. Onslow's house. I had no idea that you were here, looking on. And you, Weldon! I am astounded. Explain your extraordinary conduct, please, Laing. I demand an immediate explanation. I insist——'

"Yes, sir," said Laing. "Certainly."

The boys gathered round, open-mouthed with excitement. The two combatants were picking up their coats and passing furtive hands over their faces. Laing's opening words fell on dead silence, and were most effective.

"I don't think you will find that these boys have hurt each other, sir," said he. "As a matter of fact, Weldon and I had only just come. It seemed to me that a scramble like this would probably do the new boy good, and

I was watching quietly for a moment to see what happened."

"Which is the new boy—why is he being bullied like this? It is horrible," said Mr. Godwin, irritably. The fact that the new boy might, for all he knew, have been easily having the best of the exchanges did not occur to him. He gesticulated angrily.

"That is the new boy—Roscoe," said Laing. "As it happens he is the boy that I was caning when you came to see me to-day. He seemed rather unused to the behaviour we expect here, and I thought that a wholesome fight might improve his manners."

"It will not," snapped Mr. Godwin. "If you have any complaint against a boy, report him to me. I will not have my authority usurped in this way. It is unbearable."

Laing turned away.

"Break up," said he, shortly, to the clustered Godwinkles. "There's no need to stand there gaping. You two," he added, indicating Roscoe and Marriott, "come and see me after prep. this evening. Clear off, you others."

They trailed away like boys following an imaginary ambulance.

"I should like to say, sir," said Weldon, turning to Mr. Godwin, "that I thoroughly agreed with Laing. As a senior prefect, I didn't think there was any need for immediate interference. If they had been hurting each other much, we should certainly have stopped the fight."

"Laing is responsible, and not you," said Mr. Godwin. "I will speak to you alone, Laing, please."

Weldon moved away with his hands in his pockets, his tasselled cap on the back of his head. He disappeared moodily across the edge of the playing fields.

"Do you still refuse," said Mr. Godwin, "to tell me why you were caning that boy, Laing?"

"I am quite sure, sir," said Laing, "that that would not be fair. I caned him *instead* of reporting him. You say that you will certainly take official notice of the matter, and give him bad marks in your house book. I don't think he deserves that. I dealt with him on my own responsibility over a matter outside the actual school work. I should like to feel that you trusted me, sir."

"This cannot go on, Laing," said Mr. Godwin. "I must see the head master. You seem unduly impressed with your position here."

As a matter of fact, the head master, when interviewed, was wise and discreet.

"I trust Laing," said he, "more than any prefect I have had here during my term of office, and I rely implicitly upon him. I think you will do well, Mr. Godwin, to give him more rope than you would be inclined to allow another prefect."

Mr. Godwin endeavoured to explain, expostulating with mild ineffectiveness.

The Head merely tapped thoughtfully upon his blotting-pad with a paper-knife, and repeated the essence of his remarks.

Eventually Mr. Godwin left, crestfallen, to hatch a bitter grudge against Laing with incubator swiftness, and when the school captain had awarded Roscoe and Marriott a couple of hundred lines each (which Mr. Godwin had subsequently increased to five hundred), the matter dropped, but the house master still fumed in secret.

CHAPTER VIII

"NOT A BAD START FOR A GREEN 'UN!"

AFTER this the Mongrel Maggot found that he was becoming encased in the thorough unpopularity that is only secured at school by the select few. Harleyans of his own age spared no pains in exhibiting their disapproval of his methods at every opportunity by sly kicks and minor torments. Seniors merely gazed upon him with the morbid interest that one takes in a dead beetle. Masters, under whose notice he forced himself, became cynical and unkind. And Roscoe went through it all with the boorishness of one who, finding popularity, would feel like a fish out of water.

On the day after his fight with Marriott he was sitting indolently at his desk, during an English lesson, one hand in his pocket, whilst the other sought half-heartedly to control the illegible scratchings of his pen.

Mr. Wilberforce, the form-master, watched him keenly for a few moments. Presently he said:—

"Roscoe!" with a crispness that made the whole class look up in anticipation.

The Mongrel Maggot went on scratching idly.

"Roscoe!" said the master again, a little louder.

This time he looked up sharply.

"Have you," said Mr. Wilberforce, with cynical languor, "ever tried writing with *both* hands in your pockets?"

Roscoe did not answer. The class tittered, after the manner of court policemen.

"What are you doing?"

"Nothing, sir," said Roscoe, with as much innocence as his nature could exude.

WHO CARES?

By HYLTON CLEAVER

"Ah! Then we must give you a little something to do—some little hobby, Roscoe, for these dreary evenings. It is a terrible thing to be bored. Supposing you write me out, say—er—the first hundred lines of this very excellent and interesting geography?"

Other masters, too, adopted this line with Roscoe, and, finding him a good butt for their wit, quite enjoyed having him in their class. Marriott himself did not deign to speak to him at all. He happened, however, to be in the same form for mathematics, and during the class that day he passed along a note to him which Roscoe, opening with sleepy disinterest, found to read as follows:—

"Laing has made me captain of the House second Fifteen, and wants me to raise some sort of team, and let him see the names. Will you play on Friday?

In reply to this Roscoe merely scrawled "No" across the note, and passed it back, turning sullenly to his "Hall and Knight." Marriott did not press the matter; but when he had secured the names of fifteen men, not required for the House First Fifteen, who were willing to turn out, and handed his list in to Laing, he remarked casually that Roscoe declined to play.

When, therefore, Laing, walking with his pal Weldon, next ran across the Mongrel Maggot he taxed him with the matter.

"I am horrified!" exclaimed the house master, addressing the captain. "Please explain your extraordinary conduct, Laing."

"How about this footer business?" said he, searching Roscoe's unpleasant features for some decent schoolboyish trait. "I hear you're not keen?"

"No," said Roscoe.

"Curious," put in Weldon, shaking his head perplexedly, "curious."

"Why not?" said Laing, whose forte in conversation was his ability to keep to the point despite the wandering comments that Weldon was wont to introduce.

"I don't want to."

"But," said Weldon, "there are lots of things one doesn't want to do. We don't want to stand here talking to you, watching the shadows flitting across your melancholy mug, for example. But do we shirk the job? No, we realise that the strain is good for our self-control. Also——"

"Oh, shut up," said Laing, laughing. "Look here, Roscoe, surely you don't want to moon about all your days like a miserable deaf-mute. Why on earth don't you buck up and try to seem alive and kicking? Haven't you any ambition to boot a footer pill or dislocate some part of Weldon here?"

"No," said Roscoe.

"Doesn't seem to give himself away much in cross-examination, does he?" said Weldon.

"I expect you make him nervous," said Laing. "You're the sort of man who bends forward with his hands on his knees and yelps, when he's asked to admire a baby."

Roscoe moved restlessly, almost like a calf being branded.

"And so you won't play?" said Laing. "Well, for some reason or other that I haven't yet been able to discover, footer's not compulsory here. Before I go I shall make one effort to make it so, I think. I wish it were; then you'd just be chucked on to the field like a bundle of old rags, and if you didn't play you'd be used as the football. In the meantime you're rather a stuma in Godwin's. You interfere with the perfect working of the wheels of the house machinery like the small bit of foreign matter you are. What are you going to do—collect stamps?"

"No," said Roscoe.

"That's a good word you've got," said Weldon. "There's a nice rolling sound about it. You ought to give it quite a decent accent in time."

And he took Laing's arm as they passed on.

The only Harleyan whom Roscoe found at all affable was Menzies. He met him on that day after the fight, and Menzies led him aside and sat with him on the ivied coping that ran along in front of the school.

"I suppose," said he, briefly, "you pitched a pathetic yarn to Laing about that chocolate business?"

"What do you mean?" said Roscoe.

"What I say, you dunderheaded idiot. Did you blab to Laing that, although you bungled the job like a fool baby, I put you up to it?"

"No," said Roscoe.

"*What?*"

"Of course not. What was the good?"

"You *didn't* sneak?"

"No."

A smile broke across Menzies' flabby features.

"H'm," said he, "you're not such a frightful ass after all, then."

Roscoe was a curious character. Probably, if he had thought that by explaining who had prompted his pilfering of Mrs. Kent's excellent wares he could have avoided his punishment, he might have considered the matter. As it was he had realised that he was "in for it," and he therefore merely scowled and went through with it. His forbearance to sneak was not therefore due so much to high mindedness as to a kind of rude philosophy that had its basis in his introspection. But Menzies was not to know this. To him it seemed that this new fag, bungler though he might be, had not whined at his punishment, and he receded slightly from his usually aggressive manner. Intended abuse changed to a condescending word of praise.

"That's not a bad start for a green 'un," said he. "Still you bungled the job frightfully. A man of any sense would have waited his chance. I told you to be awful careful because the other man had been nabbed, and you just went in off-handedly and grabbed up a bar of chocolate, I suppose. Did you get *me* anything?"

"No. I only had time to get the one bar, and I ate that on the way home."

"H'm," said Menzies. "Greedy little beast. Well, if you try it again, just you be mighty careful. It's a dangerous game nowadays."

"I shan't do it again," said Roscoe.

"Why not?"

"I got tanned."

"Yes, I know. Still, what does that matter? Godwin's going to stop that."

"Well, I shan't try it again," said Roscoe, with an air of finality which, all things considered, was rather a little triumph for Laing.

"Old Mother Kent," said Menzies, "wants a tanning herself for splitting like that."

"Like what?"

"Well, *she* told Laing about it."

"*She* did?"

"Yes," mimicked Menzies, "*she* did. Don't be a jackass and pretend you don't know."

"But I thought——" began Roscoe.

"Nonsense. *You* don't think. Anyone can tell that from your face."

"But—are you sure?"

"Of course I am," said Menzies, impatiently. "She buttonholed old Laing and pointed you out, and he sent some chap after you to find out who you were."

Slowly Roscoe remembered. When the Harleyan on the bicycle had stopped him that day and said, "Hullo, I don't know you. What's your name? Whose house are you in?" he had thought no more of it. They were such ordinary questions. Now, as he realised why they had been asked, a fleeting vision passed before him of Gardner holding the bottom of his spine with both hands, cold perspiration shining on his forehead, and he felt guiltily conscious of having given a remarkable representation of a colossal idiot. But it was not in Roscoe to feel small, those days. He felt the annoyance of a pearl thief duped by a country policeman, but he in no way regretted the inconvenience to Gardner and the meanness of his idiotic trick.

That was Roscoe. He was an unpleasant youth.

CHAPTER IX

GODWIN'S TAKE THE FIELD

THE prefectoral system at Harley did not merely give wholesale authority to Sixth Formers without any regard to their capabilities. There were eight prefects, selected by the head master, although of these the school captain and the various captains of games were appointed ex officio. There were eight "houses," and it was so arranged that each house captain was a prefect. There were also eight junior prefects, one for each house, whose authority was in the main confined to the keeping of house discipline, and eight house monitors on the same principle. Each house had its "committee," consisting of the captain, junior prefect, monitor, and some prominent sportsman, and this was presided over by the house master, whose powers were about as elastic as he cared to make them. Most masters left the committee work, however, almost entirely to the boys, and this was the practice in all the leading houses.

Prefects had, of course, practically *carte blanche* in things Harleyan, being entitled to cane, set lines, or put in detention, and junior prefects supported their house captains, but their penal authority was practically confined to members of their own houses, whilst the monitors were usually senior men in the various houses, who had colours, or who had been in the school some time, and had not yet been made prefects. Their power was not great and their office was little more than a formality. In Godwin's Symington was a junior prefect, whilst Menzies, who had been at the school four years, was monitor. Both these appointments had been highly recommended by Mr. Godwin, and the result of his judgment was displayed in the condition of his house, which, now that Priest, who had been in the First Fifteen, had left, boasted no boy who had higher colours than those of the Third, so that Usherwood, the member so honoured, was their best man.

There were, roughly, sixty boys in each house, but Mr. Godwin had charge of fewer than fifty and as these were as assorted as the nibs in a sixpenny box, Laing's task in turning out two Fifteens was exceedingly stiff, especially as he was backed up in the most feeble way. Symington, on being told that he would be wanted for the team, had sudden visions of First colours and subsequent international honours, it is true, but this did not improve his play. Menzies, who was big, and who should have been a useful forward, merely groused at Symington on the foolishness of Laing's tactics

Usherwood treated the matter at first in his own blithe way, and warned Laing of the hopelessness of such efforts. Nevertheless he promised to turn out regularly, and to endeavour to fix scrum practices and training for embryo outsides. Usherwood had secret hopes of Second colours that year and even, in his more jubilant moods, of his school cap, so that he foresaw that he would himself probably be wanted to train with a school team; and his interest in the House Fifteen was secondary to his own hopes. He had grown during his years in Godwin's to realise that their own footer could never be otherwise than pathetic, and his self-interest was therefore not so selfish as it may seem. Also Usherwood was one of your born raggers. He had a long face, and a big mouth which turned up at the corners with cheerful good humour. At first sight people took him for a gentle, kindly collegian. In reality he had the most daring temperament of any man in Godwin's, and the greatest appetite for rags. He was a man who would have kept up the spirits of any team in training by his infectious joviality, but he was never meant to be the leader, even of a weak house. He had not sufficient concentration. Still there was no other, and so Usherwood it was that led Godwin's on to the field in their first match that season.

House matches were played throughout the term on a point system, First and Second Fifteen colours being excluded from the teams in order that they might train together. These games took place in the lunch hour. At the end of the Christmas term, however, a Shield competition was played off, in which enormous interest was taken, each house putting their strongest team into the field, and including all their colours. It thus not infrequently happened that the best side of what were called the "A" team games went down badly in the shield matches when other houses were strengthened by their cracks.

Firstly, Godwin's played a friendly with Canaby's, Laing's old house. In this Canaby's ran up a lead of thirty-seven points to nil in the first half, and finding in the second that they could indulge in all manner of harlequin tactics with impunity, ceased to worry about scoring. Individualism was given its chance. Now and again a man ran the whole length of the field, and then, when clear, tried to drop a goal; forwards took part in the passing runs; their full back came up and accepted a roving commission amongst the outsides. These fantasies resulted in the Godwinkles losing all the heart they ever had, and going down to the tune of nearly sixty points to what was, however, admittedly a good side.

When, therefore, the day of their first "A" team game arrived, Godwin's quaint fifteen trooped on to the field with the self-conscious air of abasement assumed by men told off to "bite an inch off the poker" or "kiss Mrs. Hankinson," by way of forfeit in a parlour game.

Laing had a flag. He also had the house out to cheer and encourage their chosen champions. With dejected expressions full of foreboding they lined up along one touch-line, murmuring amongst themselves—discontented supers. Somewhere Roscoe was present. Laing had told him definitely that the least he could do was to turn up and shout "Godwin's!" cheering their bright play and sympathising with them in any bad luck that might befall. When the Maggot had protested, he had inquired sharply the nature of his prior engagement. As a matter of fact Roscoe had none. He was spending these days in meanderings round the country, his only companion being the cheapest sweetmeat obtainable, carried in the dirtiest bag one could imagine. His interests were entirely self-centred; his mood always malignant.

"I want to go down to the village," had been his lame excuse.

"If," Laing had said, sententiously, "you went down to the rushes, you might be some use on the footer field. But by going down to the village you do yourself or your house no good whatever. Why can't you go down this evening before lock-up, or to-morrow? Try to take some interest in the house. Just you turn up. If you can't play you can at all events shout."

In the ordinary way, a house captain would never have noticed a boy like Roscoe at all; particularly when that house captain happened to be also the skipper of the school, and although Laing believed in individual treatment, he had not time to get hold of juniors, find out their names, and get them personally interested in the house. He appealed to the men *en bloc* to buck up and make the sparks fly. Symington and Menzies, of course, undid most of his good work, and he, therefore, had no reliance in them. But Roscoe had twice come under his eye as a dangerous type of new boy, and he was consequently watching him carefully.

Godwin's were playing Munro's, a house with a good average side. Usherwood kicked off. There was some mild and absurdly restrained applause from his supporters, then the Godwinkles found that Munro's were on top of them; the ball was lobbed from hand to hand; they gave way, and started to pursue their opponents with apparent vim. Somebody knocked on a pass, and a scrum was formed just over their twenty-five. They packed down miserably, with the nervous uncertainty of novices; Munro's got the ball, heeled, and sent a three-quarter away to score with ease.

As his men formed up on their goal-line glancing dejectedly at one another's expressions, Laing came across to mark the kick.

"Hard luck!" he shouted, cheerily. "You want to go down to those rushes with all your heart, though. Make 'em pack tight, Usherwood, and keep the ball in the back row as long as you can, then wheel—you've got some weight in the scrum, you know. Well played, Morrison; you tackled that man jolly well. Keep hard at it, and mark your men. You ought to score now."

The kick failed, and again Usherwood kicked off to the tune of mournful cries from the touch-line. Laing's words had had some slight affect, however. Usherwood shouted cheerily to his men and followed up his kick like an infuriated bull, his forwards backing him up with more vim now than before. Fortunately the man into whose arms the ball descended fumbled

it and knocked on, but in the scrum that followed Munro's again got the ball and heeled. The Godwinkles broke up and cantered off aimlessly, whilst Symington, having funked his man abominably, threw himself at full length on the ground, as if having just missed a brilliant tackle. Munro's, who were none too strong themselves in the three-quarter line, scored twenty points in the first half.

Items of interest consisted in a slight improvement in the Godwinkles' scrumming, a good run by Morrison, entirely unsupported, and some plucky tackling by Gardner, who had by now sufficiently recovered from his injury to play again. From time to time disheartened onlookers murmured to their neighbours their intentions of sending home urgent requests for their removal from the house of Godwin, and grumbled loudly at being morally compelled to watch such uninteresting and scrappy football. Only a few of Munro's men had turned up to look on, but Laing's idea in ensuring a good turn out was to give the Fifteen the impression that there was, after all, some honour in playing for their house, and thus to make competition for places keener. Footer bloods passing the game stopped now and again to watch, and smiled a little at the unevenness of the play, but they never laughed, for they sympathised with and appreciated Laing's difficult task and the sporting spirit in which he was setting about it.

The second half of the game was very similar to the opening stages. Godwin's scrambled about ineffectively and tired some time before the finish, but Laing's stimulative counsel shouted from the touch-line never diminished in vigour, and before no-side his keenness was rewarded.

Usherwood, whose sprightly enthusiasm had kept pace with Laing's undeviating encouragement, suddenly got the ball at the line out, near Munro's twenty-five, and threw it back to Morrison, who swerved round the forwards and was away; Usherwood, who had plenty of pace, broke loose and, backing him up, took his pass at top speed and, dodging the full back, scored a good try which he converted himself. This aroused quite a show of enthusiasm and inspired the Godwinkles to harder work, and they finished in good style, though badly beaten.

As they trailed off the field, Laing came up with Usherwood, all smiles.

"Good man," said he. "I can see you're going to be valuable. Well played."

Then he passed on to Morrison, Gardner, and other men who had been conspicuous from time to time. And thus, not with abuse, but with infectious enthusiasm, he started to build up his team.

Perhaps the one Godwinkle of all who had easily the most wretched hour was Roscoe. He never smiled, never shouted. He scowled throughout, and kicked savagely at the grass until he had dug himself a small grave into which he would, if he could, have wept.

CHAPTER X

AN ADVENTURE BY NIGHT

MENZIES was one of your flabby men, who, addicted to bullying, knuckle under with some readiness when they can prove in even the most flimsy way that discretion is, by a fraction, the better part of valour. He was loud mouthed and aggressive; imbued to a goodish extent with a sense of the importance of looking after No. 1 and No. 1's rights; the kind of man whose ambition it is to build up a reputation for dare-devilry, founded on episodes whose exactitude shall not be inquired into, and to feed this at the expense of cats-paws. He was useless at his work, slack at games, and ever ready to take offence or to give it, provided that in so doing he was not letting himself in for any personal pain, such as that caused by blows to the nose. As the joint fag of Menzies and Symington, Roscoe therefore started his Harley life under circumstances not calculated to improve his character. Symington suited Roscoe's purposes admirably, as the figure-head who could take any blame resulting from his own appetite for the evil in things, and Roscoe found that in reality it was Menzies from whom he took his instructions and little permits—not Symington.

One day, well on into the term, Menzies called Roscoe into his study.

"Look here, Roscoe," he said, "you're my fag, and you're supposed to do what I tell you without asking questions, and if when you've done anything for me, I tell you to forget all about it, you're to do so—see?"

"Yes," said Roscoe. "What d'you mean, though?"

"There you are—asking questions. It's enough if you just understand; there's no need to be inquisitive."

This time Roscoe was silent.

"Have you," continued Menzies, after a pause, "ever seen pictures in books of chaps getting out of windows by shinning down a rope made of sheets?"

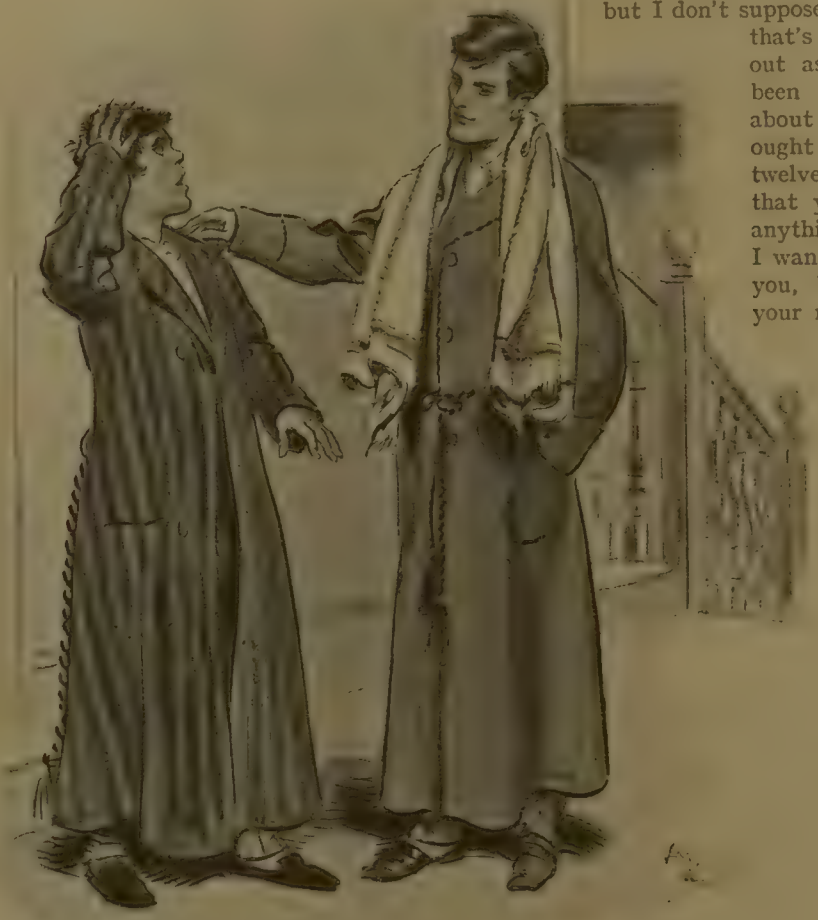
"Yes," said Roscoe. "Why?"

"If you ask any more questions, young Roscoe, I'll knock your head off. You're sound enough really. Don't spoil things by being nosy. Well, that is *not* what I'm going to do, but it's something in that line. One or two people are going down to the village this evening, they've got a billiard match on at the common room. Your job will be to sit down on the floor by the window and keep cave If anything happens, shut the window and hide If it's all clear, leave it just open at the bottom. I'll look out when I come back."

The prospect of this cold and dismal vigil in no way appealed to Roscoe, but he dared not say so."

"How long," he inquired, apprehensively, "will you be?"

"Not more than an hour and a half. The match starts at half-past eight, but I don't suppose the fun'll begin till that's over. We shall get out as soon as Godwin's been round. That'll be about half-past ten. We ought to be back by twelve. And don't forget that you're not to know anything about it, really. I want you, and I've told you, but just you keep your mouth shut."



He had almost reached the door of his dormitory when Laing appeared, and tapped him on the shoulder. "I think I've been walking in my sleep," said Roscoe.

Roscoe spent the remainder of the evening brooding over the coming night watch, cursing Menzies and bemoaning his fagdom. In the first place, he failed to see how he was to get out of his own dormitory. But when he went to Menzies and explained his difficulty, Menzies merely looked at him in scorn.

"Get out?" said he. "Great Scott, you must be a mug. Lots of people get out in this house. As soon as Godwin has finished his prowl, you merely tumble out of bed as quietly as you can, shove on a dressing-gown, and creep out of the room and downstairs. Nobody takes any notice of you. If you knock anything over or start making a shindy, someone'll turn over and blink at you—tell you to shut

'Two Bulls,' and we're going down in bowler hats. I'm not going to ask for an exeat because that'd be absurd. So I'm just going out, and I want your assistance."

"How?"

"I shall get out through the window of your

up, or something, and then go to sleep again. Symington's your prefect. He won't hear. He daren't when I've told him not to. And look here, if you make a row, or creak on the stairs and get nabbed, I'll flay you into ribbons. See? You're to meet me at half-past ten at the common-room door. I happen to know they've lost the key, so we shall get in as easy as winking. If you're late I'll make Symington give you a thousand lines or so for something or other."

"All right," said Roscoe, dolefully.

He would not have minded this adventure if a more lively part had been apportioned to him, but his nature was more that of a bad-tempered dog than of a cat. Watching for hours at a mouse-hole seemed to him a poor way of spending the evening. Besides, it would be cold. There was another point. It was easy enough to say "hide" if anything untoward should occur. But where? Was he expected to crawl into an inkpot, or what? The bare common room which served both as a class-room for the studyless at preparation and as a "loose box" out of school hours, offered no great opportunities for those in search of refuge. However he dared not object to Menzies' orders, and he was accordingly awake when Mr. Godwin poked his head into the room for a moment, looked round at the beds, received Symington's "All in, sir," and disappeared.

A little before this he had heard the big clock downstairs strike ten and, after waiting for awhile, he stealthily looked round him, and drew first one leg then the other out of bed. Then he reached for his dressing-gown, wrapped it round him, and, covering his feet in slippers, crept to the door, passed through, closed it softly behind him, and started downstairs. No one of the other nineteen boys in his dormitory had stirred. They might have been lying awake, but night prowls had become so popular of late in Godwin's that little or no interest was taken in people who preferred wandering about in the cold to the comfort of a warm bed. Symington slept in an annexe to the room, and, as Menzies had foretold, made no sign though he must have been awake, for he had reported all in order to Mr. Godwin before getting into bed, quite a short time ago. Roscoe was early at the meeting-place, and stood trembling, partly with cold and partly with uncertainty of his own safety, until the form of Menzies suddenly loomed up in the darkness, his narrow eyes peering keenly around him. He was fully dressed and carried a bowler hat in his hand. He nodded, motioned to Roscoe, and led the way to the door of the common room without a word. Roscoe followed him into the room and across to one of the big, low windows that looked out on to the lawn. Menzies quickly opened this and looked out into the night. It was an absurdly simple affair, and suited Menzies. Real excitement and hairbreadth escapes were not in his line. He liked simple adventures which allowed scope for embellishment in recounting. He turned to Roscoe.

"Now, you sit down here on the floor," said he; "you'll be quite warm in that dressing-gown. Whatever you do, don't go to sleep, or I'll smash you into a pulp. Leave this window just open at the bottom, unless anyone comes down on the prowl. If they should, you must look after yourself, but shut the window first; then I shall see it, and I can keep a watchful eye and try to get in another way. You'll find that sleep-walking is your best excuse for being here. They can't slate you for that. Just squint and walk like a clockwork policeman, and you'll get through anything. So long."

He climbed out through the window, dropped softly on to the grass, and disappeared into the night.

Roscoe, alone in the dark, shivered and knew true misery. There was always something wretched about Roscoe, something contemptible, something irritating, but as he stood there, a loose-built, disconsolate figure, his hair ruffled, his eyes sleepy, there was something also in him that cadged for a little passing sympathy.

He sat down in the corner, and looked forward to a dreary vigil, in which he could foresee accompanying nerve-rackings and bitter chilliness. A cold breeze came through the open window and blew across his face, but he dared not move to a far corner of the room for fear that he might hear footsteps, and be surprised before he could close the window. He began, presently, to realise that he hated Menzies. When first he had come to Harley, this man had appeared affable and friendly, had actually outlined to him a trick which he described as an everyday lark, but for which Roscoe had subsequently been caned by Laing. Since then Menzies had confided in him now and again when he wanted assistance in some little affair behind the scenes, and finding Roscoe a fairly willing helper in attacks upon law and order, questionable in their fairness, had not hesitated to use him quite frequently, to compliment him sometimes on his "dare-

devilry," and to suggest little adventures for Roscoe himself. But in all these dealings he kept to his bullying attitude, saying, as it were:

"I'll let you do it as a favour—but as a matter of fact, you'll *have* to do it whether you like it or not."

Roscoe reviewed these various little affairs as he sat, cold, in his corner, and for the first time the thought of them began to annoy him. It was not that he regretted his own part. He had as much desire for senseless horseplay as ever, but he felt sorry that he should be compelled to do just whatever came into Menzies' head, without consideration for his own convenience and comfort. He began, in fact, to dislike the bullying attitude of this farcical monitor.

Presently he began to wonder whether he might not close his eyes and rest them for awhile, still listening intently for suspicious sounds; shivering slightly, he decided that he might, and he leaned his head back against the wall and dozed.

Now and again he opened his eyes and looked out into the darkness, wondering vaguely what the time was, and how long Menzies had really been gone. At these times he altered his position, and drew his dressing-gown more tightly round him, longing for the cosiness of his bed. Then he would sit back against the wall and doze again. And each time his forty winks took longer per wink; until at about the fifth period he curled up into the corner, and unconsciously fell soundly asleep.

Chill morning woke him. He sat up with a jerk and tried to remember things. The darkness outside had changed to a mournful grey. He could see clearly across the lawn and out into the lane. Somewhere a lonely bird appeared to be gargling. He looked round the cheerless room as he recollected the events of last night, and a dull wondering fear came over him as to what had happened to Menzies. Then, as his eyes turned back to the window, he realised that this was shut. For a time he sat and stared at it fixedly, wondering what he could do. He had forgotten to be miserable. Men do when they become seriously alarmed. He straightened his cramped legs, and got painfully to his feet, debating within him whether to open the window again or not, and wondering whether Menzies was safely in, and what he would do to him.

At last he decided to leave the window shut, thinking it safer so, and he walked sleepily across the room and cautiously opened the door. The course seemed clear. He started upstairs with an apprehensive wariness, and crept along the passage. As he went, he considered that it must be nearly six o'clock. Fellows would soon be getting up. He had almost reached the door of his dormitory when a figure came down the passage wrapped, like Roscoe, in a dressing-gown, and wearing a big towel round his neck. Roscoe hesitated. Then he recognised Laing, who generally got up early to have a game of fives before breakfast. He thought frenziedly for the two moments grace that he had. "Did Laing know? Had *he* closed the window? If not, could he pass into the dormitory without explanation? Should he say good-morning?" Then he remembered Menzies' advice: "Sleep-walking will get you through anything." Certainly that would be the safest course. With a desperate ingenuity he adopted a fixed-eyed stare and a listless walk. Laing came up and tapped him on the shoulder. There was a humorous twinkle in his eye.

"What are you doing, Roscoe?" said he.

It was here that the Mongrel Maggot became inane. A continued air of dazed stupidity might, by a remote possibility, have got him through. Instead, however, he affected a sharp return to consciousness.

"I think I've been walking in my sleep, Laing," said he.

"Walking in your sleep?"

"Yes."

"What makes you think that?"

Roscoe did not know; so he grunted and shook his head.

"Ever done it before?"

"Oh, yes," said Roscoe, brilliantly.

"Well, it's a dangerous practice," said Laing. "You'd better tell Godwin; p'r'aps he'll put a little gate on top of the stairs, or tie a bell round your neck on a ribbon."

Roscoe looked at him stupidly.

"All right," said Laing, "get back to bed, and then get up and have your bath."

Roscoe saw Menzies before breakfast. The monitor smiled at him superciliously.

"Well," said he, "have a good night's rest?"

Roscoe stammered incoherent observations

"Next time," Menzies continued, "you might do as you're told. I might have been nabbed. What the deuce did you want to go to sleep for, you little swine?"

"I was sleepy," said Roscoe, sullenly.

"What's that got to do with it? You were told off to watch the window. I came back

By HYLTON CLEAVER

about twelve, climbed in, and found you curled up in the corner like a blinking hedgehog. So I left you there. I wasn't going to wake you after that. Supposing Godwin or somebody had come in? Nice thing, wouldn't it have been?"

"*I* might have been nabbed," said Roscoe, boldly.

"And a jolly good job if you had have been. Hadn't I told you you could pretend to be sleep-walking? If you'd done that you wouldn't have been nabbed. *Were* you nabbed?"

"I met Laing in the passage."

"What did you do?"

Roscoe told him.

"What a frightful idiot you are. He's bound to have twigged. Serve you right, that's all. Next time p'r'aps you'll keep awake when you're told to. I think I've taught you a lesson, my young friend."

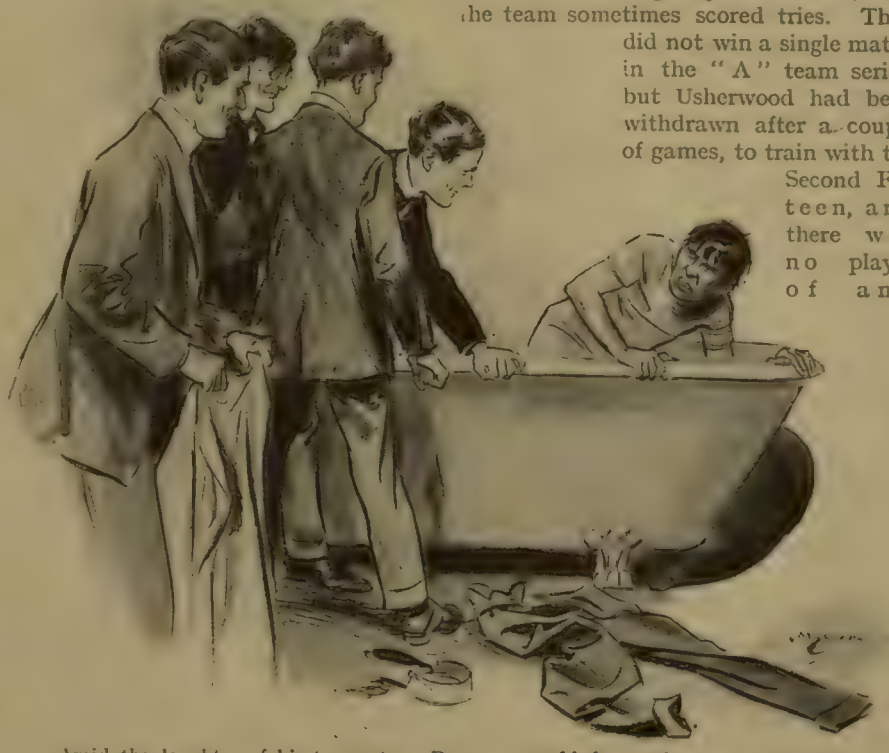
Then Roscoe *knew* that he hated Menzies

Later that day, when Laing had had time to consider the situation, he sent for Roscoe. He knew perfectly well that the boy had not been walking in his sleep at all, for when first he had noticed him, he was walking along in the most ordinary way, with his hands in the pockets of his dressing-gown. Then had come the sudden ridiculous change to the clockwork gait. Laing chuckled as he remembered it.

"I think," said he, when the Mongrel Maggot came into his study, "I'll have you transferred into my dormitory, Roscoe. I can keep an eye on you there. You'll be safer."

"All right," said Roscoe.

And as he went away down the passage he felt secretly glad. At least that move would prevent any more night escapades on behalf of Menzies



Amid the laughter of his tormenters, Roscoe scrambled out, drenched and furious.

CHAPTER XI

THE ART OF USHERWOOD

AS term wore on Godwin's "A" Fifteen attained some sort of cohesion. Laing's regular and whole-hearted coaching began to take effect. Here and there promising material came to light, and was carefully developed. The faults of second or third year men were partly obliterated, and the team sometimes scored tries. They did not win a single match in the "A" team series, but Usherwood had been withdrawn after a couple of games, to train with the Second Fifteen, and there was no player of any prominence in the side at all. Morrison and Gardner were the pick of the team, whilst Menzies' weight was useful when he cared to apply it. Marriott came into the Fifteen in place of Usherwood, and except for occasional pick-up games the idea of a second team had to be given up.

But when the time came for the start of the Shield matches, Laing hoped for better luck. Usherwood would undoubtedly be of great assistance in the scrum, particularly as he had twice played for the First and would, if he played again, obtain his school "stockings." This addition to the team would, he thought, also

give a fillip of confidence to the other men's play, and as a big and enthusiastic crowd, almost as large as that which supported school matches, always lined the ropes for these games, there would be some competition for the honour of the last few places in the team.

Altogether, Laing leaned heavily on his hopes of Usherwood, and in view of this it was unfortunate that Usherwood played for the school again, against Bedford, and, gaining his stockings, became excited. The presentation of stockings to men who had played three times for the First, generally in lieu of some man on the injured list, was sometimes a preliminary to school colours, sometimes a consolation to men who had occasionally been played, for being left out of the Fifteen finally capped.

In the match following which he was entitled to his stockings, Usherwood had played with spirit and a good deal of skill. He had fallen over the line for a try, and had been complimented by Weldon, so that he felt, in the first place, a little glad to be alive, and following upon this he became conscious of an urgent need of some outlet for his animal spirits. His exuberant temperament could not stand the strain put upon it.

He commenced by summoning a meeting of his cronies, and reminding them of an unwritten law once in force and winked at by the authorities. This called for the ducking once during each term of all those who looked upon the cold bath with disfavour, by those who indulged in it. The scheme had once been popular, but sometimes boys had been ducked who were not physically fitted for the morning dip, and in two cases results had been rather serious. In view of this the authorities had suddenly bent their brows upon that which had been in force for years, and forbade it.

Usherwood now demanded that, for one day only, this performance should be revived. His colleagues approved. The non-cold-bath habit was, they agreed, offensive. After school that day they gathered together, and commenced a reconnoitring tour. As they came upon delinquent Godwinkles they roped them in, and the band gradually swelled. For the most part the shirkers were juniors, but here and there older men were pounced upon. All were welcome. Symington was a guilty party, but after a brief consultation it was decided that unfortunately he could not be held liable for punishment, and he was therefore left in peace. Arrived at the house bath-rooms, Usherwood and his merry men—amongst whom Menzies appeared with great self-satisfaction—herded their captives into a corner and set a guard over them. In turn they were then led forward despite struggles and squeals of protest. When a man refused to undress he was set upon and hurriedly stripped with neither dignity nor care. If a button seemed stiff, the garment was torn asunder. Speed was the great point in view. Time was valuable. At any moment the meeting might be disturbed.

Usherwood was one of the duckers. He stood with another man called Payton, beside a bath filled with cold water, and each unfortunate youth was seized, as the dress attendants handed him on, and plunged without ceremony under the water, being allowed to crawl out of the bath unaided and at his convenience. To avoid the stigma of bullying, towels were provided, and each boy was left free to rub down or be rubbed by a colleague, and to dress as fast as he liked. Good humour was the keynote of the performance. Here and there a boy endeavoured to disprove the charge of being a rabbit, by laughing half-heartedly with the duckers, but for the most part the non-bathers looked on the scheme with keen disapproval, and grumbled loudly.

Roscoe was amongst these. He called attention to his case by fighting for freedom with all the force of which he was capable. On being seized he landed out indiscriminately with fists and feet, even biting at the restraining hands of his captors. Reinforcements came to the assistance of the latter, and Roscoe was thrown down and sat upon, whilst Usherwood regarded him with his most judicial air.

"What's he gurgling for?" he inquired of another man, innocently.

"He's laughing," was the reply. "*He* sees the joke, bless his heart."

"What's he laughing like that for, then?" asked Payton.

"Ah," said Usherwood. "It's an unpleasant story. They let him do it when he was a baby, you see, and now he can't get out of the habit."

"They ought to have pulled him up."

"Yes," said Usherwood, "on the end of a rope. I expect they will after he's bitten Lancaster to death."

"Anyway," said Payton, "what's it matter if you do catch cold? You simply crawl into the doctor, loll out your tongue, and pant like a dog, and he says, 'Six weeks' sick leave.' It's no end of a good scheme, Roscoe."

"Come," went on Usherwood. "Pull yourself together. Get up like a man, and crack a few jokes with us."

"He can't," said Payton.

"Can't what?"

"Get up like a man."

"Oh, no, of course not. They call him the Mongrel Maggot, don't they? Well, let him get up like a maggot then. See how I bend forward in my excitement. My brow fairly glistens with glee."

The men who had been finding Roscoe an uncomfortable couch rose gladly, and Roscoe struggled to his feet, glaring savagely at all around him.

"At times like the present," remarked a learned youth in thick-rimmed glasses, "Roscoe seems to go mad."

"Yes," said Usherwood. "What does it feel like to be mad, Roscoe?"

For answer the Mongrel Maggot turned on his heel and strode triumphantly towards the door.

"Oh, no," said Usherwood. "Officers, there is your prisoner! Do your duty!"

Then they fell upon Roscoe, tearing his clothes from him excitedly, and having undressed him as far as his vest, they threw him into the bath. A mighty splash drenched the onlookers. Roscoe scrambled out; jeers and ribald laughter greeted him. He stood shivering before them, like a man rescued from drowning.

"You're all fools," he said, furiously.

"I'm afraid," said Usherwood, holding up Roscoe's shirt with a curious interest, "that as a result of your violence, Maggot, this is now of the Manx order."

"What d'you mean?" said Payton.

"It seems to be shorn of its tail. Here you are," he went on, picking up the other part of the garment. "This'll do for a chest protector during the cold weather, Roscoe."

He then adopted a grave air, whistled the opening bars of the National Anthem, and led the way out of the bath-room. By now Usherwood was tuned up. The mafficking spirit having taken possession of him, dangled before his mind's eye ingenious little schemes suitable for the occasion. He was a skilful ragger whose ideas, however, were not on a par with those of Menzies. The latter sought only to ape what he imagined to be the ways of a 'Varsity "blood." The delight Usherwood took in a dormitory battle royal was only equalled by the satisfaction felt by Menzies in accepting a cigar. While Menzies bragged of his friend the billiard-marker, Usherwood went unostentatiously on his cheery way, turning aside now and again to bring into operation some safety-valve for his buoyancy, and that of his many friends.

Menzies never hesitated, however, to talk loudly of his association with Usherwood, unwanted as this was. When men chuckled over some spirited exploit achieved by the latter, Menzies told how he, too, had been "in it" organising and performing the most daring deed of all. The humour of the situation was to be found in the fact that as a result of his brag Menzies was unpopular and never believed, whilst Usherwood's big-hearted sincerity found him a corner in most Harleyan hearts.

As he left the bath-rooms he was already planning a farcical scena for production that night; but before this came off there appeared on his programme a gambol with Mr. Godwin.

Usherwood was cordially disliked by his house master, and knew it. It was, in fact, owing to this conspicuous failure to "get on" with Mr. Godwin that he had been deprived of the privilege of a study the previous year, and since then been obliged to do his preparation in the common room with the rabble over which Mr. Godwin presided each evening. From the social point of view he was never at a loss for snugness, however, for he had a standing invitation to make use of most of the studies whenever he liked from the tenants thereof. At preparation, however, he was obliged to work under the personal eye of the house master, who had confessed complete distrust of Usherwood in every way. Now that he was the footer "blood" of the house, and in the running for a school cap, however, it seemed certain that Mr. Godwin could no longer keep him with the junior men. Even *he* must see the incongruous nature of such an absurd rule. With a little restraint and diplomacy, Usherwood must undoubtedly have regained a study this term, although he was younger than most of the crack footer men; but his present mood was quite out of keeping with such a line of action. Mr. Godwin, thought he, must be his next butt.

(*To be continued.*)

The Seaplane's Raid

By Percy F. Westerman.

A Story of the War

Up swept the seaplane, her starboard float ripping through the canvas plane other opponent.

"NOTHING definite," announced Lieutenant-Commander Bourne, closing the code-book and handing it to the waiting yeoman of signals.

His brother officers exchanged glances. They were all on the tip-toe of expectancy. It would not be too much to say that, strong-minded men though they were, their nerves were tingling with ill-suppressed agitation.

"It has gone five bells," remarked Godfrey, the fleet-surgeon. "Allowing for the difference between London and Berlin times we ought to know by eleven."

H.M.S. *Faun* was slowly forging ahead about twenty miles N.N.E. of the Terschelling lightship—ready and waiting for the momentous order that was to confirm the long-expected news of hostilities between Great Britain and Germany.

In the Navy List the *Faun* appeared as a twin-screw cruiser, second class, of 3,200 tons and 7,500 indicated horse-power. She was an

old boat, credited with doing twenty knots in her palmy days, but now capable of doing a bare eighteen. Seven or eight years ago her armament had been removed and she was struck off the effective list of ships. How, then, came it that the *Faun*, on the eve of hostilities, found herself on the outermost line of Britain's vast naval force in the North Sea?

Incapable of offering any serious resistance, unable to elude pursuit, the cruiser was one of the smaller craft engaged upon a forlorn hope —mine-creeping.

It was known that the Germans, besides sowing the waters adjacent to our shores with electro-mechanical mines, had laid these latent instruments of death in the approaches to the Elbe, Jade, and Weser. These much debated weapons of defence were in addition to the observation-mines operated from the shore batteries.

The *Faun's* mission was to take advantage of the night, and "sweep" the mine-field, "creeping"—as it is officially termed—for these deadly instruments of modern naval warfare.

The *Faun*, though appearing in the Navy List as a mine-layer, was, with her consorts, to play no part in dropping mines. Her present duty was to clear a path, at all hazards, for a flotilla of British destroyers that were to attempt a dash upon the German North Sea ports.

Only a few weeks previously the *Faun*, in company with the other mine-layers, had steamed decorously through the Solent to join the vast assemblage of British naval strength at Spithead. Of the hundreds of thousands of spectators of the historic inspection only a few noticed the comparatively insignificant little cruisers that sedately followed their huge consorts; fewer had even the slightest inkling of the part these mine-layers would shortly have to play.

In addition to her ordinary ship's company, the *Faun* carried several members of the R.N. Flying Corps, and, as supernumeraries taken on board at Portland at the last moment, two midshipmen.

Mervyn Attercliffe, the junior, was one of the youngest midshipmen in the service. By what he regarded as a rare slice of luck, the Admiralty had promoted a batch of senior cadets, who, under ordinary circumstances, could not have received their dirks for, perhaps, another couple of years.

In piping times of peace the "exigencies of the service" are responsible for many inexplicable orders; in war still more so; and thus H.M.S. *Faun* — a second-class cruiser — was allotted a couple of midshipmen.

Mervyn Attercliffe was frightfully keen. His boyish enthusiasm, tempered by the sense of responsibility and discipline he had acquired at Osborne and Dartmouth, was balanced by the knowledge that he was now an officer of the King's Navy, and one on whom devolved a serious duty, not only to his comrades but to his sovereign and country.

On that momentous Tuesday evening Attercliffe, being midshipman of the watch, was on the navigation bridge. His range of vision was limited to the heavy fo'c'sle of the cruiser as she lifted and dipped to the white-flecked foam. The night was dark. The moon, nearly at its full, was frequently obscured by black, rapidly scudding clouds, driven before the stiff south-westerly breeze. The mercury, falling rapidly, foretold bad weather.

To all outward appearance the *Faun* was in total darkness. She carried no navigation lights, every scuttle was screened. The chart-room windows were carefully darkened, so that no stray beam of light should denote to a watchful enemy the presence of the dreaded mine-layer.

From the bridge all was darkness, and a chaotic turmoil of short, steep, broken sea. The coast-wise lights no longer twinkled brightly to tell mariners of the proximity of the numerous sands, that, like ground-sharks awaiting their prey, stretched for miles from the Frisian shore. Lightships and gas-buoys had been removed. The sounding-line and compass were the sailor's only reliable guide.

Again and again Attercliffe glanced towards the closed door of the chart-room, as if to fathom the minds of his superior officers within. He realised that directly the fateful and long-expected message arrived, no time would be lost in communicating its import to the ship's company, but still—there was the long, tedious vigil.

A stealthy, rapid footfall upon the bridge ladder attracted Attercliffe's attention, and one of the wireless staff messengers appeared.

The man was trembling with excitement as he handed the officer of the watch a slip of paper.

Without a word Lieutenant Fayne took the momentous message to the chart-room. Two minutes later the ship's company were in possession of the knowledge that Great Britain and Germany were at war.

At full speed the *Faun* headed towards the

invisible estuaries of the Jade and Weser, escorted by the light cruiser *Styx*.

The cruiser's mission was indeed fraught with peril. Apart from the danger of running upon the now unmarked sandbanks that guard the torpedo base of Wilhelmshaven, there was the possibility, nay probability, of encountering the outlying German destroyer patrol or being "picked up" by searchlights of the shore-batteries. It was also fairly safe to assume that the estuaries were guarded by means of "observation" mines, which, harmless to friends, would mean death and destruction to foes.

On and on pelted the mine-sweeper through the seething waste of water. Four hours of darkness only were left for her to accomplish her errand. At any moment one of the hostile destroyer flotillas, steaming with screened lights, might be encountered. Then, a sudden blaze of searchlights trained upon the luckless mine-sweeper, followed by a tornado of shell, would be her greeting and her doom. Not a man of her gallant crew recked the danger; all they hoped was to accomplish their task ere dawn. That done, they must save themselves if possible.

"Light on the port bow, sir," reported the look-out.

Bringing his night-glasses to bear upon the object indicated, the lieutenant of the watch saw that there were the three regulation navigation lights of a steamer approaching bows on. No warship this, otherwise she would not so openly show her position.

"Hard-a-starboard, quartermaster!" ordered the lieutenant-commander, at the same time ringing for half-speed ahead, followed by "stop."

"We'll hail her, Fayne," declared the skipper. "If she's a British vessel she may be able to give us some information."

The tramp, for such she proved to be, was lumbering along at a modest eight knots. The two vessels on slightly converging courses were now nearly abreast, when a megaphoned hail came from the unknown, demanding why no lights were shown.

"What ship is that?" hailed the *Faun* in reply, ignoring the tramp's request.

"*Takeastep*, of London, from Copenhagen to Emden, with a general cargo," was the response.

"Then shape a course for Old England as fast as you jolly well can," advised Bourne. "We are at war with Germany. Have you seen any destroyers about?"

"No, sir," was the chastened answer. "Now I know why we didn't sight the Weser Light."

Round swung the *Faun* and steadied herself on her course, her progress morally aided by frequent wireless reports from the attendant yet invisible *Styx* that nothing of the hostile torpedo flotilla had been seen.

Meanwhile, below decks the mine-sweeper presented a scene of extraordinary activity. Artificers were overhauling the winches, leading seamen making sure that the sinkers and grapnels were adjusted to the proper depth. On the quarter-deck men were deftly assembling one of the two seaplanes ready for an observation flight at the first signs of dawn.

"Searchlights," ejaculated Bourne, pointing to a bluish glare against the skyline on the starboard bow and a similar blurr of light to port.

"Ay!" ejaculated Fayne, grimly. "That's Heligoland over there, and the Weser batteries to starboard. Give us an hour more. By Jove! *That's* done it!"

Less than three miles to leeward loomed up the *Styx* as if outlined in silver against the drifting clouds. She had been picked up by the searchlight of one of the enemy's destroyers.

Simultaneously a spurt of lurid flame came from a point not far distant from the source of the searchlight. This was quickly followed by a sharp detonation, and a shell shrieked on its way towards the *Styx*.

The British light cruiser was not backward in replying. Ere the echoes of the first shot from the German destroyer had ceased, her twelve-pounders spoke with no uncertain voice. The searchlight vanished as quickly as it had appeared, and the destroyer, the red flames streaming from her shattered funnels, turned and fled, with the *Styx* hard on her heels.

One message only did the pursuing cruiser send to her consort:—

"*Styx* to *Faun*: Am luring patrolling destroyer to nor'-west. Independent action."

It was the signal for the *Faun* to commence her task and to save herself afterwards—if possible. She could no longer depend upon the co-operation of the protecting light-cruiser. The latter, having done all she could to decoy the hostile destroyers from the vicinity of the mine-sweeping vessel, left the *Faun* to her own devices.

Away on her port bow, and at a considerable and ever-increasing distance, came the unmistakable sounds of the *Styx* encountering the whole of the German destroyer flotilla from the naval port of Wilhelmshaven. Mine after mine the *Faun* grappled and caused to explode harmlessly at a safe distance from the

ship. The thunder of the destroyers' guns, outvoicing the detonation of the mines, aided the daring British seamen in their nerve-racking ordeal. The pursuit of the first destroyer had changed into a running fight, the light cruiser deliberately enticing her attackers farther and farther away from the, as yet, undetected *Faun*.

As the hazardous work proceeded, the first blush of dawn appeared above the low-lying coast. The *Faun's* task was almost accomplished. In another ten minutes she would be at liberty to retrace her course, when——

Less than eight miles astern, and just discernible against the dispersing night clouds, were a dozen grey-painted vessels moving at high speed.

"The Borkum flotilla, by Jove!" ejaculated the lieutenant-commander. "Jolly awkward, Fayne."

Bourne spoke coolly enough. His subordinate nodded. Both men realised that the *Faun* was trapped.

Stepping to the after side of the bridge and gripping the guard-rail, the lieutenant-commander leant over and hailed one of his officers.

"Up as fast as you can, Mr. Rumbold. Independent action: you understand?"

"Very good, sir," replied Rumbold, saluting.

Arthur Rumbold was the probationary flight sub-lieutenant attached to the *Faun* for aerial scouting purposes. He was a young lightly built fellow with the typical cast of airman's features.

Already he had given the final overhaul to the small but powerful seaplane assembled on the unencumbered quarter-deck. Petty-officer Black, the observer and wireless man, was already seated at his station. Outside the light steel chassis, and ready to the petty-officer's hand, were a dozen bottle-shaped objects, the aerial bombs. Projecting well above the pilot's seat was a businesslike one-pounder automatic gear.

"Mr. Rumbold," said Lieutenant-Commander Bourne in a low voice. "One moment."

The sub. was up the bridge-ladder in a trice.

"Yes, sir?"

"Look here, Rumbold," continued his superior in low, even tones, "you remember our conversation a few hours ago? Now don't hang about hoping to save us. It can't be done, you're only risking your chances in the other matter. It is far more important. Our work's done, yours is about to commence. By the bye, can you take young Attercliffe?"

"Yes, sir."

"But the additional weight?" hazarded Bourne.

"She'll make light of it, sir," replied Rumbold, reassuringly.

"Very good. Mr. Attercliffe," continued the lieutenant-commander, raising his voice, "you are detailed for duty in the seaplane."

Gripping his superior's outstretched hand, the flight sub-lieutenant descended the bridge-ladder and hurried aft, followed by the young midshipman.

Wondering for what reason he had been so hurriedly told off for aviation duties, Mervyn Attercliffe climbed agilely into the seat indicated by his brother officer.

With a whizz the huge propeller began to race, the frail structure quivering under the vibration, as a dozen brawny seamen hung on to the floats to prevent the seaplane from prematurely leaving the well-greased ways.

Rumbold raised his hand. With one movement the assistants sprang aside, and like an arrow from a bow the seaplane leapt from the deck of the doomed vessel.

The midshipman had no knowledge of Rumbold's orders. He fully expected that the sub. would fly immediately over the oncoming destroyers and attempt to put them to flight by means of the aerial bombs. But Rumbold knew better. The seaplane must be kept intact for several hours longer. To do this she must fly at a great altitude, so as to be immune from rifle and shell-fire. At the desired height it would be a waste of valuable explosive charges to hazard a successful hit on a swiftly moving object that looked little larger than a match-stick. No, Rumbold had other plans.

Up and up climbed the seaplane till the horizon was visible in the slanting rays of the sun for a radius of nearly a hundred miles. Far away to the westward a blur of dark objects denoted the *Styx* and her dogged pursuers, but there was no reply to the seaplane's wireless call to the light cruiser. Evidently she had received hard knocks and her wireless gear had been temporarily rendered useless.

But Attercliffe's attention was centred upon the scene immediately beneath him. The sea, viewed from a height of over five thousand feet, presented the aspect of a placid lake. The *Faun*, forging ahead at full speed through the heaving, broken water, was maintaining a steady fire with her hastily installed quick-firers against the swarm of swift mosquito craft which were converging upon her.

The unequal combat could not last long. A

couple of lean destroyers leapt forward within striking distance of their Schwartz-Kopff torpedoes. Both missiles took effect, one exploding nearly amidships on the starboard side, the other close to the port propeller.

Ere the cloud of smoke and steam thrown up by the detonation had dispersed, the unfortunate *Faun*, with the white ensign still floating proudly in the breeze, heeled till her funnel bases touched the water, then slid swiftly beneath the waves.

"She's done for!" shouted Black into the midshipman's ear, forgetting in his excitement the disparity of rank. Attercliffe did not reply. It seemed more like a horrible dream to see the mine-sweeper plunge to her ocean-bed. He dimly wondered why Rumbold had made no effort to assist the harassed vessel.

But the flight sub-lieutenant gave no indication of his intention. With set lips, and seemingly oblivious of the tragedy enacted a mile beneath him, he shaped a course almost due east, still mounting higher and higher. In the excitement of the attack the seaplane's presence had been overlooked, but now several of the destroyers began a brisk fire upon the rapidly retreating air-scout. Many of the shells screeched unpleasantly near, bursting far beyond the swiftly moving British aircraft. The Germans had entirely miscalculated the range, and presently the fire ceased.

The seaplane was now over the land. Spread out like a relief map were the estuaries of the Jade and the Weser, with Wilhelmshaven plainly visible. The naval base appeared to be entirely at Rumbold's mercy. It seemed impossible for a number of bombs dropped upon that expanse of docks and store-houses to miss their billet. Yet the airman refrained to act upon the offensive.

"A Zeppelin, sir!" announced Black, by means of the speaking-tube between the pilot and the observer; for the roar of the propeller, the hum of the motors, and the rush of the air made ordinary conversation impossible.

Midshipman Attercliffe overheard the petty officer's report. Leaning over the side of the chassis he saw a sausage-shaped object a thousand feet below. It was travelling almost in the same direction, but, owing to the superior speed of the seaplane, seemed to be practically stationary.

From a quick-firer on the upper surface of the airship a couple of shells were let loose upon the daring British seaplane. They, too, passed wide, while again it seemed to the midshipman that the huge, unwieldy envelope was at the mercy of the seaplane's bombs.

Still Rumbold held on, as if scorning his gigantic yet ponderous antagonist, till the Zeppelin was left far behind.

"Two monoplanes, sir," reported the petty officer in matter-of-fact tones.

Rumbold dropped the mouthpiece of the voice-tube, and glanced behind him. His eyebrows betokened annoyance as he saw the two hornets of the air slowly yet surely approaching. The seaplane, speedy though she was, was no match for the military monoplanes.

With a movement of his head the sub. indicated the automatic one-pounder. Agilely the petty officer left his seat and manned the gun, while the midshipman stood by with the spare ammunition belts.

Zipp! A shell from the nearmost aeroplane tore between two of the vertical struts on the seaplane, bursting with a terrific detonation less than a hundred feet ahead. The fragments of the missile, hurled forward by the momentum, expended their energy harmlessly in the rarefied atmosphere.

For the first time now Attercliffe realised the danger of his position. Here he was kept aloft a mile or more above the ground by a frail construction of wire and canvas, exposed to the shell-fire of an automatic gun. One small fragment alone of that deadly missile would be sufficient to put the seaplane out of action and hurl its crew to a terrible death. Yet, even in the face of instant death, the midshipman felt strangely calm and collected. At that moment he would have given all he possessed for something to cool his parched throat that, alone, seemed to give him inconvenience.

Suddenly Rumbold altered the lever actuating the twin vertical rudders. As the seaplane swung round, the leading hostile aircraft came within the training arc of the automatic gun. A rain of one-pound shells was directed upon the foremost pursuer.

Struck by the storm of projectiles, the monoplane literally crumpled up. Fragments, falling with varying velocities, streamed earthwards, leaving only a pall of rapidly dispersing smoke to mark what had been her position only a few brief seconds before.

Carried away by the excitement of the aerial combat, Attercliffe gave vent to a rousing cheer; while the petty officer, his thumb still pressing upon the trigger, was unconsciously releasing a hail of shells into space.

The gun suddenly ceased to fire. The belt

The seaplane sped on towards the lock gates, and suddenly there was a terrific detonation. The ground shook, and barges were wrenched from their moorings. A shrewd blow had been struck for Britain!

of ammunition was exhausted. In a moment Attercliffe was holding out a fresh supply, but Black made no effort to take the cartridges from him. The petty-officer was dead—killed at his post by a fragment of a bursting shell.

Even as the midshipman made the discovery Black's body rolled slowly on its side. For a brief instant it remained poised on the edge of the chassis, then fell earthwards.

Rumbold scarcely noticed the occurrence. His whole attention was centred upon the second hostile monoplane, for both aircraft

were now approaching each other at the relative rate of approximately 180 miles an hour.

It seemed as if the sub. meant to charge his antagonist. The midshipman, preparing to take the place of the unfortunate petty-officer at the gun, stood spellbound, his hands clutching at the metal struts supporting the weapon and its mounting.

The German monoplane had ceased firing. Indecision caused by the seaplane's tactics increased to panic as the British aircraft approached. The pilot of the former literally lost his head. The whole fabric of the hostile air-scout trembled under the erratic movement of the elevating planes.

Attercliffe held his breath. A collision seemed imminent, when Rumbold, as cool as the proverbial cucumber, imparted a slight pressure to the elevating levers. Up swept the seaplane, the underside of her starboard float ripping through the canvas plane of her opponent. For several seconds the British craft swayed violently in the disturbed air-currents in the wake of her foe. When, at length, Attercliffe realised that he was not being hurled towards the ground, he glanced backwards. The monoplane had met the fate that had already overtaken its consort.

"Narrow squeak!" ejaculated Rumbold through the voice-tube, as he steadied the seaplane on her former course. "Rough luck losing Black. . . . You'll have to make yourself useful now, Attercliffe . . . obey orders promptly and coolly. May as well tell you what I want to do. I'm making for Brunsbuttel."

Brunsbuttel! The North Sea entrance to the Kaiser Wilhelm Canal. The midshipman's ready mind instantly grasped the situation. The British seaplane was to make a determined effort to cripple the chief means of German naval communication between the North Sea and the Baltic. No wonder, then, that Rumbold had to jealously husband his stock of explosives.

No longer subjected to the immediate menace of an aerial attack, the sub. steered by compass, at the same time constantly referring to a map in a celluloid case conveniently placed by his side.

The barometer altitude gauge showed a height of 11,000ft., at which distance the seaplane would be practically invisible from the ground and certainly the hum of the propeller would be inaudible. As the sun rose higher in the heavens, the chance of the aircraft being discovered would be still more diminished. On the other hand, the garrison of Wilhelmshaven, alarmed by the sound of the aerial combat, would, without doubt, have signalled the news of the presence of the hostile aircraft, and the vigilance of the German troops would be redoubled.

The seaplane was now immediately over the wide estuary of the Elbe. The navigable channel of that usually crowded commercial highway, plainly visible between the tidal-covered sandbanks, was practically deserted. Merchant ships had either been detained at Hamburg or Cuxhaven, or else warned off, while a few government craft were busily engaged in removing the beacons and lightships and sowing the waterway with observation mines.

Even as Attercliffe watched, the Holstein shore began to lose its definition. It resembled the blending and blurring of a dissolving lantern. A sea-fog, banking up with the remarkable suddenness peculiar to the North Sea, was sweeping down upon the estuary.

"Hard lines!" muttered the sub., at the same time shutting off the motor and allowing the seaplane to glide. Instead of the roar of the propeller came a peaceful silence, broken only by the ringing of a church bell, the barking of a dog, and the distant rumble of trains. The seaplane was already over Holstein territory, and somewhere in the vicinity of Germany's most vital waterway—the Kaiser Wilhelm Canal.

Seven thousand . . . six . . . five . . . four. The seaplane was on the point of plunging into the upper stratum of the fog-bank when Rumbold arrested the downward flight. He began to realise that his carefully prearranged plan was likely to be thwarted by the dense mantle of mist that hid the ground from sight. He was uncertain of his position. The forces of nature were against him. He wished that he had used the means of offence at his command against the Zeppelin and the port of Wilhelmshaven, rather than waste his resources in a futile manner.

Suddenly a thought struck him.

"We'll plane down, Attercliffe," he exclaimed. "Perhaps the lower edge of this fog-bank is clear of the ground. Look here, when I give the word, untoggle that lanyard."

The midshipman nodded. The casting off of the lanyard would result in the simultaneous dropping of the whole of the bombs.

The seaplane glided spirally. In twelve minutes she descended, not as Rumbold had expected, upon the fertile Holstein fields, but upon a broad, apparently deserted stretch of

water bounded by quays alongside of which were moored dozens of large barges and numerous powerful tugs.

The sub. took in the situation at a glance. Less than a twelvemonth previously he had passed alongside that same waterway in a private steam-yacht, when spending his leave on a pleasure cruise to the Baltic.

By sheer good luck the seaplane had alighted in the Kaiser Wilhelm Canal and at a distance of half a mile from the huge double locks of Brunsbuttel. Apparently the canal was being kept clear in momentary anticipation of the passage of a naval squadron. The quays were crowded with soldiers; uniformed officials were in charge of the tugs and barges. A thousand eyes were directed upon the seaplane, as with a splash her floats struck the placid water.

The troops, unacquainted with the appearance of British seaplanes, were nonplussed. Evidently they regarded the strange object that had shot from the clouds as one of the air-scouts of the Imperial German forces.

To rise would be to court suspicion. Ahead and just discernible through the mist was the sub.'s goal—the massive lock-gates. At all costs they must be destroyed.

A guttural voice hailed the seaplane. Rumbold, fair German linguist as he was, could not trust himself to reply.

Half turning he glanced at his companion. The midshipman, pale yet collected, was standing by the cord that was to liberate the guncotton charges.

"Jump!" hissed the sub. "Jump for it. You'll be all right, Attercliffe. Your uniform will protect you. Jump, I say, and swim for it."

For a moment Attercliffe hesitated.

"But you?" he hazarded.

"Jump!" repeated Rumbold, fiercely. "Obey orders."

The sub.'s chief thought was to demolish the lock-gates. Since it was impossible to rise, the only alternative was deliberately to charge the steel structure, and regarding himself, the seaplane and its load of explosives as a concrete instrument of destruction, sacrifice himself on the altar of patriotic duty.

As a side issue, there was his young comrade to consider. Attercliffe had already done good service in assisting Rumbold in the navigation of the seaplane. There was no necessity to immolate the midshipman in the approaching holocaust. Better a prisoner of war, to render service to his country at some future date, than a needless sacrifice when one life alone was required.

With a quick movement the midshipman cleared the chassis and dived into the water. Ere his head reappeared Rumbold had restarted the motor. The seaplane was already gliding straight for the lock gates.

Coming to the conclusion that something was wrong, one of the German officers drew his revolver and fired at the aircraft. The bullet, passing through one of the planes with hardly any resistance, ricochetted from the surface of the water and found a billet amongst the crowd of soldiers on the opposite quay. Another and another shot followed in quick succession, but still the seaplane resolutely held upon its course.

Rumbold made no attempt to rise. With ever-increasing speed, and unmindful of the shots that the astounded Germans were erratically firing, the gallant Englishman sped on his last voyage

Not the faintest attention was paid to the swimming midshipman. As Attercliffe gained the side of one of the barges he grasped a trailing rope and watched the rapidly receding seaplane

Suddenly the air was rent by a terrific detonation, the ground shook, the water of the canal was violently agitated. Barges were wrenched from their moorings and dashed against the quays. Over the place where the twin-locks were rose a huge dense cloud of black smoke, from which débris was ejected in all directions.

That cloud was the funereal pall of a gallant British officer and the seal upon one of the greatest disasters that could have befallen Britain's arrogant foe.

Half an hour later a young British midshipman, his saturated uniform clinging to his limbs, was marched, a prisoner of war, between two files of Prussian soldiers. He carried his head erect, his bearing was one of pride. He cared not for one moment what was in store for him. A shrewd blow had just been struck for king and country.

If the German High Seas Fleet were already in the North Sea, its retreat to the Baltic in the event of a reverse was cut off. If, on the other hand, it was in the neighbourhood of Kiel, it could only give battle to the British Home Fleet after negotiating the dangerous neutral waters of the Cattegat. Rumbold's heroic self-sacrifice had not been in vain.

At the military headquarters at Brunsbuttel a staff officer was laboriously drafting out a report to Berlin, while an assiduous Press censor was striving to conceal the disconcerting news of the result of the seaplane's raid.

How to Make a Model Battleship

Written and Illustrated by HENRY GREENLY

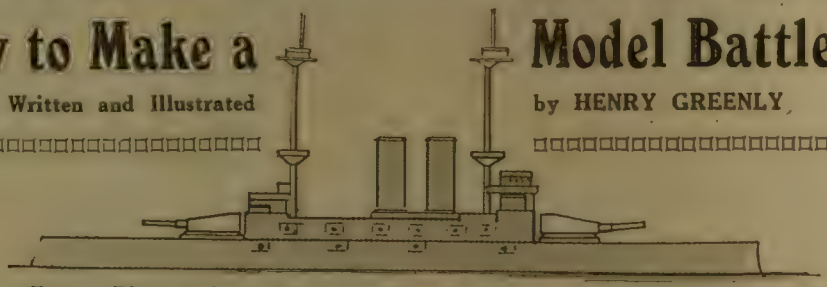


FIG. 1.—Diagram of a pre-Dreadnought battleship of the central "citadel" type.

WITH the advent of war and the intense interest in the movements and composition of the various fleets, the construction of models of naval ships will, no doubt, now occupy the spare time of a large section of the model-making community.

While the bigger ships are always the most fascinating, there are difficulties in the way of making accurate models to work by steam unless a very large scale is adopted. Of the two main types, "line battleships" and "battle cruisers," the former are generally shorter and, therefore, make better prototypes for models of given length. Since the commencement of the "Dreadnought" era and the increase in the number of heavy guns carried, turrets are now situated in the centre of the ship. The older ships, like the *King Edward VII.* and *Formidable*, had a central citadel for smaller armament, in which the funnels, masts, and other paraphernalia of the propelling and navigating machinery was also grouped, while the four large guns were carried in turrets or on barbettes at each end of the vessel, as shown in the rough sketch.

This was a very good arrangement from the point of view of the model maker, as he could arrange to remove all the central "top-hamper" to get at the internal machinery, and, furthermore, this part of the vessel, being relatively high up above water-line, plenty of space was available for the boiler, or, in the case of an electric model, for large accumulators.

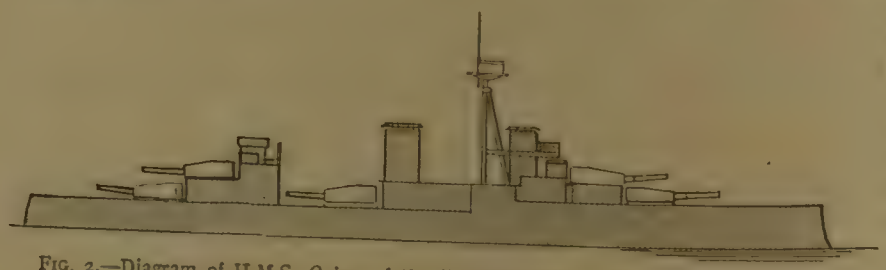


FIG. 2.—Diagram of H.M.S. *Orion*, of the "Dreadnought" type, carrying ten guns.

The drawing, Fig. 2, is an outline diagram of the British Dreadnought H.M.S. *Orion*, a boat carrying ten large guns. As will be seen, the deck superstructures are divided into two distinct parts by the central turret. To shorten the model and to retain as much as possible the character of the model battleship, the writer suggests making a model without the centre turret, which would reduce the armament to eight large guns. This closes the hull up, and, for a given length of model, a proportionately wider beam may be adopted. This will increase the stability and carrying capacity (displacement) of the hull. On these lines the accompanying design for a working model is submitted.

The main features of the design comprise an externally correct model, within the limits already mentioned, with either a single or two-cylinder slide-valve engine driving twin screws, and a boiler which burns solid fuel. The hull of the model may be made out of a solid block of wood 3′ 1″ long by 6″ wide and 4″ deep. The wood should be best dry yellow pine, this material being light and at the same time obtainable in sound baulks. Another advantage of yellow pine is that it does not warp badly. The wood is, however, comparatively expensive, and a piece of the dimensions quoted is worth at least 4*s.* to 6*s.* If this stuff is not readily procurable, American white wood is the next best, and will be found quite easy to work.

Before starting to carve out the hull, a rough full-sized drawing should be prepared, and the shape of various cross sections settled upon, and pieces of cardboard—technically termed "templates"—cut out to the various shapes of the inside and outside sections. The inside can be roughed out nearly to size first, and then the outside, care being taken in both cases not to cut too deeply. The lightest possible hull is, however, the desired result; indeed, in model power boat construction, every

part, more particularly in all upper works, must be made as lightly as is practicably consistent with strength. A heavy hull means that the displacement will be increased and the carrying capacity reduced. Heavy, clumsy upper works and deck fittings will render the boat unstable.

may be turned out of aluminium rod bored out for lightness' sake, or made of box-wood, and fixed into the turrets. Only the visible portion of the guns need be made, and, if possible, they should be pivoted in the turrets so that they may be elevated or depressed, as in the actual thing. The rear turrets may

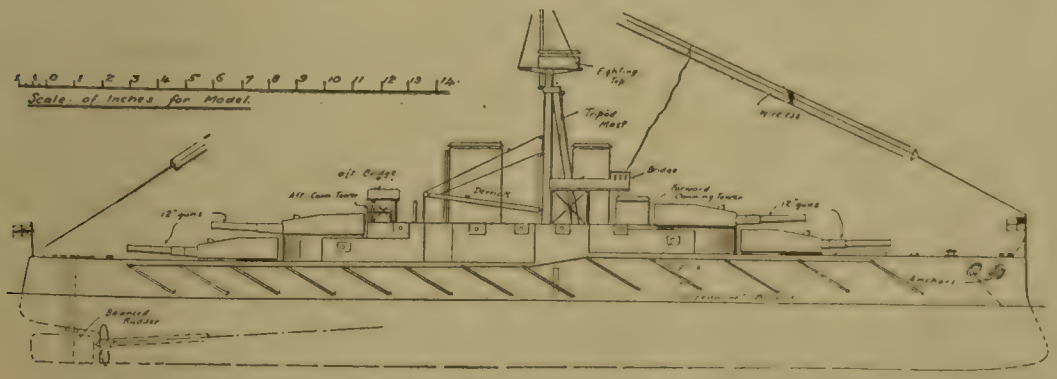


FIG. 3.—External view of a model battleship, 3ft. long.

"Aft" of the centre citadel the height of the main deck above water-line is reduced. Provision for this may be made before the hull is carved out, while the wood is in the baulk. The deck is made of $\frac{3}{16}$" pine, and is temporarily fitted until all the machinery and other internal fittings are ready. As soon as

be fixed to a pivot, those "forehead" being arranged to lift off to enable the operator to attend to the needs of the boiler.

The mast is of the modern tripod type, and may be made of light brass tube, soldered into a ferrule at the top. The main portion of the mast is extended beyond this ferrule to carry

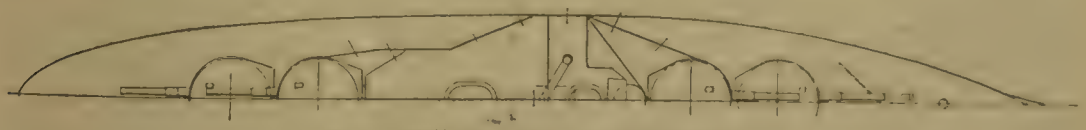


FIG. 4.—Half deck plan of model battleship.

the hull is carved out, it should be painted lead colour to prevent changes of weather causing the wood to split. The superstructure of the central citadel may then be prepared, sound $\frac{3}{16}$" mahogany being used.

The turrets may be built up out of thin sheet metal or of wood, and the model 12" guns

the fighting top, and also the smaller topmast yards and standing rigging.

Two funnels are fitted, one larger than the other. In both cases they are of oval section. The funnels in a steam model should be made of thin brass sheet with an ornamental top soldered on. The foremost funnel shields the

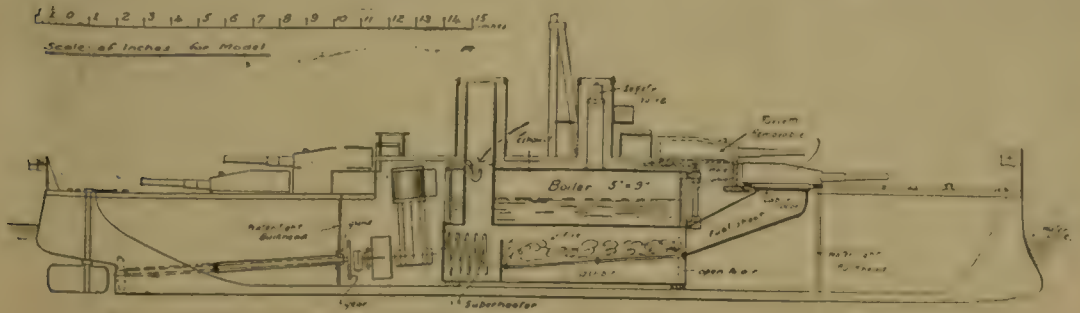


FIG. 5.—Sectional view of a model battleship, showing the arrangement of the machinery.

safety valve in the model, while the after one encases the working funnel.

The boiler is of the cylindrical type, and, like all other parts, should be as light as possible. As the furnace has a large area and is not truly cylindrical, it must be stayed to

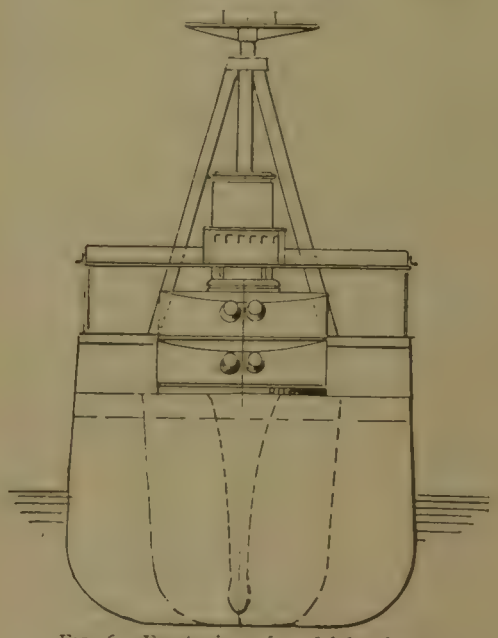


Fig. 6.—Front view of model battleship.

the outer shell with $\frac{1}{8}$" brass screwed stays. Both the inner and outer plates must be tapped, and the stays may then be soft soldered to render them absolutely steam tight. The uptake flue from the furnace may be screwed into the furnace crown, and expanded and soldered into the outer shell at the top. Gun-metal flanged castings are recommended for the ends, but the metal in these should not be more than $\frac{5}{64}$ths of an inch thick. The best fuel is charcoal; it is cheap and much safer than oil, spirit, or petrol. It may be burnt on a grate made of a number of $\frac{1}{8}$" steel rods, tied together by drilled cross-bars. At the back end of the grate a plate must be fixed to shut off the end of the ashpit, and to compel the air to pass through the fire.

The fuel is fed from the forward turret hole by a tin shoot, the top of which is fitted with a readily removable lid or cap. This makes the boiler very easy to stoke when the boat is in service.

The crown of the firebox should be supported by about four $\frac{1}{8}$in. diameter stays in the centre, and also by two angles riveted and soldered on at the side as shown in the cross section, Fig. 7.

The engine may be a single-cylinder engine, $\frac{3}{4}$" by $\frac{3}{4}$" bore, or two engines with $\frac{1}{2}$ by $\frac{1}{2}$" cylinders driving the twin screws separately. In the former case the transmission must be made through gearing; in the latter the shafts are geared together just to keep them in synchronism, as, unless the two propellers rotate at exactly the same number of revolutions, the boat will not keep a steady course. The propellers should be $2\frac{1}{4}$" diameter, and should revolve in opposite directions. The exhaust must be led up the chimney to induce the draught through the fire, and a superheater, made of a coil of copper pipe (as indicated in Fig 4), is recommended.

To preserve the buoyancy of the model under adverse conditions, two water-tight bulkheads at the "fore" and "after" ends of the ship may be fitted as indicated in the drawing, Fig. 5. These bulkheads may be of thin wood, and, before the decks are fixed on, the insides of these water-tight compartments should be well painted, the final coat of paint containing a little varnish.

As to the numberless deck details with which the model may be embellished, space

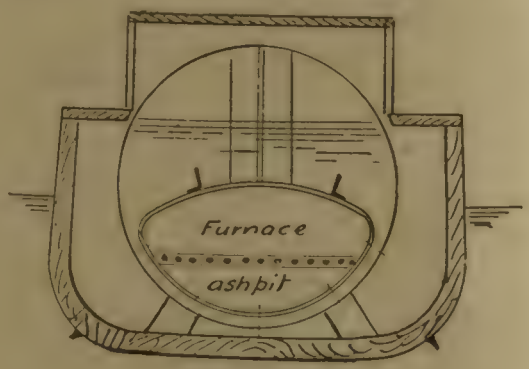


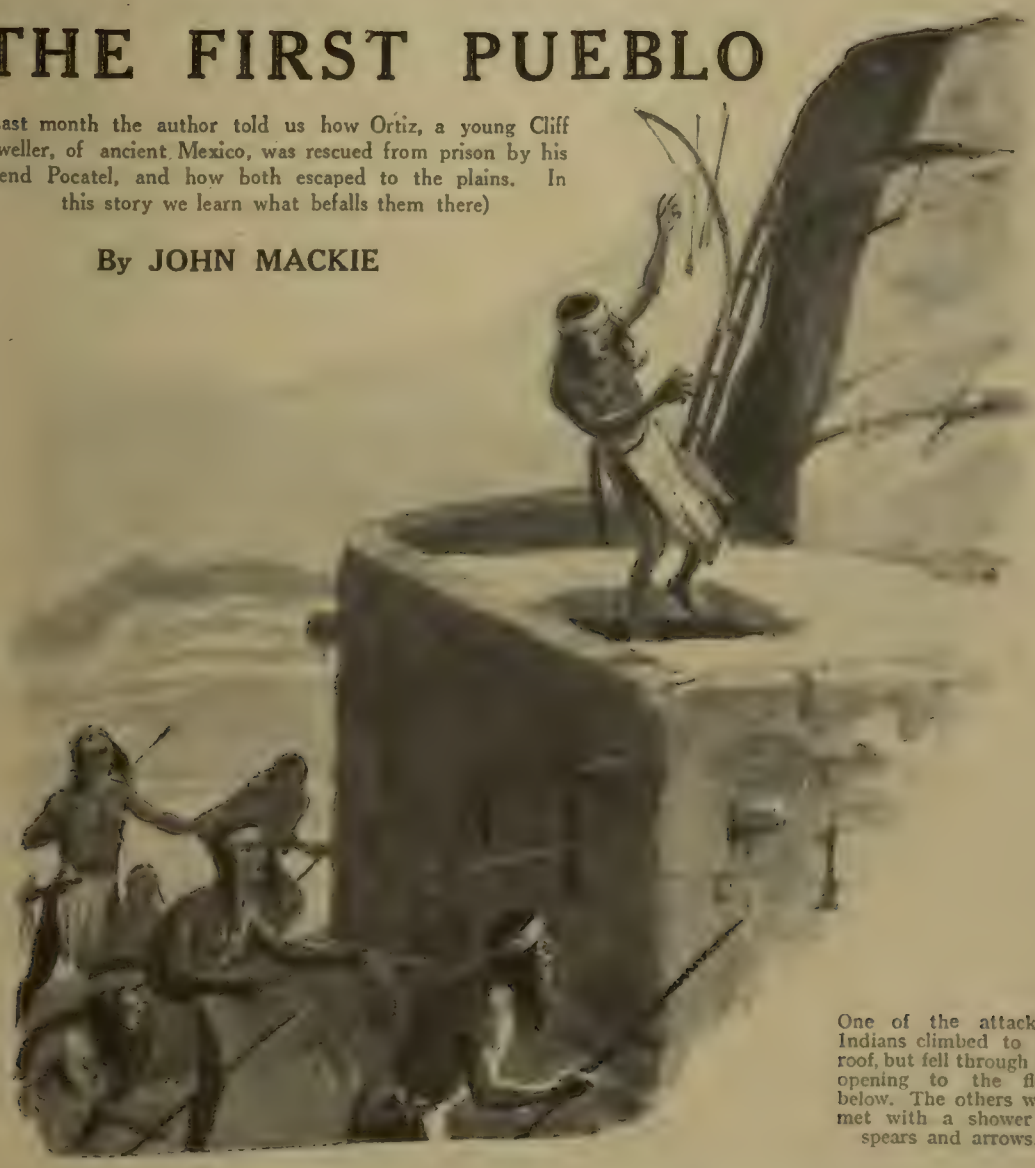
Fig. 7.—Cross section through boiler.

alone prevents their description in detail. Photographs of war vessels are obtainable in most dockyard towns which will help the reader in the construction of these details, as well as make clearer many points in the present design.

THE FIRST PUEBLO

(Last month the author told us how Ortiz, a young Cliff Dweller, of ancient Mexico, was rescued from prison by his friend Pocatel, and how both escaped to the plains. In this story we learn what befalls them there)

By JOHN MACKIE



One of the attacking Indians climbed to the roof, but fell through the opening to the floor below. The others were met with a shower of spears and arrows.

I

THE sun was already up before Ortiz and Pocatel caught a glimpse of the great prairie to the east across the valley of the Rio Grande. It was a glorious sight, that far-stretching grassy sea here and there broken by snow-tipped and isolated mountain peaks of volcanic origin.

"Montezuma be praised!" exclaimed Ortiz when he realised that they were nearing the eastern edge of the high table-land, and must soon descend the almost precipitous slope to the great river.

"They may only now have found out that I have escaped," commented Ortiz. "Still, even if they did discover that fact shortly after I had gone, they would be at a loss to make out how it was I managed to leave that ledge. Until it is known that you have gone also, it may not strike them that someone aided me."

"They will have some difficulty, I fear, in believing that I have helped you," said Pocatel, candidly. "They all know—well, how I felt about you. When they discover that I assisted you to escape and even fled with you, they may come to realise the truth of what I told them—that it was I who goaded you to attacking me."

"Well, that's a thing of the past now, Pocatel. The council will have to learn how there is a limit to their interference with one's private affairs. Perhaps our going away together will help them to understand this."

"Our people have been cliff dwellers and communists so long that they are unable to adapt themselves to a new condition of things," observed Pocatel.

"They'll have to very soon," said Ortiz. "Another year's drought like the last and they'll be obliged to quit the Frijoles Valley, and emigrate as we are doing now. Are you tired, Pocatel?"

"It has been a stiff walk, but it has been cool, so I don't feel so very tired," admitted his companion. "Carrying these spear-shafts and bows and spear-heads has given us a little extra work."

"It was wise of you to have thought of them, Pocatel. We'll want them shortly. And, by the way, I'm getting very hungry. Let's have a cake and a piece of that dried venison. We are safe from pursuit now even should they trouble to come after us at all."

"When they do follow us up, it will be in a friendly manner, and to join us, I hope," laughed Pocatel. "All the same, it is hard to part with one's own people as we have done. I do keep thinking about them."

"They'll be glad to think we have escaped, anyhow. And they will live in the hope of seeing us again some day. I gave our own kith and kin a hint as to what we were going to do, you know."

It was a drop of about 3,000ft. to the Rio Grande. Still, despite their healthy appetites, they resolved not to rest nor eat until they crossed it.

"Look!" exclaimed Ortiz. "Even *this* river is only a shadow of its former self. There are some dead pines. Let us lash them together and make a raft."

The current carried them farther down stream than they had bargained for. Still, in less than half an hour they had managed to cross safely.

A couple of miles or so on the other side they entered a little wooded valley where the banks were almost precipitous, and there they decided to rest and eat. The sun had disappeared over the western mesa or table-land before they prepared to go on again. It would be almost impossible to see them now from the high ground they had left behind. They would continue their walk westward by moonlight. The Cliff Dwellers hardly ever crossed the Rio Grande. While resting they had lashed spear-heads to shafts, and seen to bows and arrows and such weapons as they had brought with them. Their chipped obsidian flints were as keen as a razor's edge. They were to require them sooner than they expected. They were leaving the little wooded valley by a well-beaten pad which some wild animal had made when Pocatel, who was in the lead, uttered a warning cry, threw aside the bundle of weapons he carried, grasped his stout spear-shaft, and brought it to the ready.

"Look out, Ortiz!" he shouted. "It is a bear and it is going to charge!"

Despite his warning he himself was taken by surprise. He was certainly much nearer to the great brute which had so suddenly appeared directly in their path. It had been customary for the Cliff Dwellers to go bear-hunting, but then they seldom did so unless there were several of them together, when a preliminary discharge of sharp and jagged arrow-heads into its body, and a simultaneous attack by three or four skilled spearmen, generally ended the wild rush before the bear had time to do any harm. But now and again Bruin, by his wonderful cunning and agility, not to speak of his enormous strength, sometimes managed to kill a hunter or two before he himself fell a victim to superior numbers. In this instance there were only two striplings against him.

Pocatel, indeed, behaved like a hero when the bear rushed on him. He did not jump aside and get up a friendly tree as he might easily have done. He waited until the bear was close up to him, took one short step to the right, and, levelling his spear, lunged home just behind the shoulder.

Unfortunately for Pocatel, the shade of the trees and the deceptive twilight were against him. A hitherto unseen twig diverted his aim, so that his spear-head glanced off the great brute's back, inflicting only a long skin wound. At the same moment Pocatel lost his footing and fell backwards right across the pad. But, strange to say, Bruin did not stop to dispatch him after the manner of bears, which, as a rule, maul their victim in a way too terrible for words. The bear had caught sight of Ortiz, and realised that he also must be made to bite the dust before he could have things all his own way.

Pocatel afterwards declared that the bear actually spurned him with its great paws, as it rushed on his friend. Probably Bruin somewhat lost his head, for he did not stop to rear himself on his hind-legs after the fashion of his

kind when attacking at close quarters. He rushed on Ortiz blindly, with the result that as the boy leapt aside he drove his spear with all the strength that was in him into the bear's neck. He did it so cleanly and swiftly that he was able to withdraw it again the same moment.

It was probably the first time that Bruin had fought humans, and the consequences were as unexpected and inexplicable as bear tradition said they were. He had undoubtedly been rash to rush on the enemy as he had done. He must give battle in a more cautious manner. Next moment he had reared himself on two legs, and was advancing with poised paws and eyes that glinted wickedly.

"Look out, Ortiz—look out! I'll be with you in a moment," cried Pocatel, who had picked himself up and seized another spear.

But Ortiz and the bear were already engaged. The youth knew that his only hope lay in keeping his head and outwitting the great brute until perhaps Pocatel could come up from behind and help him. Even then the odds were terribly against them, for Bruin is one of the most powerful and resourceful fighters in wild nature. Even well-armed and experienced Indians will hesitate to attack him.

As the bear with huge strides bore down on Ortiz, the youth feinted as if to drive the lance into its breast. Down came a great paw that would have shivered the stoutest shaft in the world to matchwood had the two met. That was the moment for decisive action. Ortiz recovered his spear smartly, and as the bear snatched back its paw again the youth lunged, this time driving the slender razor-like spearhead right into the huge creature's breast in the neighbourhood of the heart. With an agonised snarl Bruin flung himself bodily on his cunning attacker. Once again Ortiz narrowly escaped death by throwing himself sideways into the undergrowth. Before the bear could turn and Ortiz regain his feet, Pocatel was alongside. What he did was indeed taking risks. Almost touching the bear, and gripping his spear with both hands, he raised it over his head. In another moment he had brought it down right behind Bruin's head where spine and skull meet. The spinal cord was severed and the bear dropped like a stone.

Pocatel had undoubtedly risked everything in that one last attempt, for, had he been only a fraction of an inch out in his aim, the bear would have had him that same moment beyond all possibility of escape. And there is no creature in wild nature that wreaks such a terrible vengeance upon its attacker as a bear.

"Well done, Pocatel! That was the pluckiest thing I ever saw. He'd have had me but for you!" cried Ortiz, turning upon his companion with glowing face.

"Thank you, Ortiz," said Pocatel. "We have got to stand or fall by each other now. But what say you to taking this bear's skin with us? It will be useful later on. We can also take some of the meat and dry it in the sun."

II

It was well after midnight before they moved on again. They were now heavily burdened with the skin of the dead animal and the best portions of the meat. Still, they were both strong, and knew how to carry burdens in a way that would considerably surprise boys in these more civilised days. They tramped on steadily, steering by the stars for three or four hours, until they came to a small rocky ridge where they resolved to eat and rest before going on again.

Half an hour later juicy bear-steaks were grilling on the glowing charcoal, and the sun was shining above the horizon. Pocatel and Ortiz both felt undoubtedly tired, but neither of them would admit it.

"I never tasted such tender steaks in all my life," said Ortiz, with enthusiasm. "I think bear meat is finer than deer meat. We had better cure the rest of it. You see, we won't come across a bear every day."

"I devoutly hope not," said Pocatel, soberly. Then he joined in the laugh that Ortiz raised.

They continued their journey, and late in the afternoon came to a low circular hill with a rock suggesting a look-out rising in the centre. Hard by was a creek with a plentiful supply of water. There was a well-timbered little valley close at hand.

"An ideal place in which to camp," exclaimed Ortiz. "And look, over there—buffalo!—stringing out like a herd of goats!"

"And what a lot of yams?"

"And pigeons—and there is a bustard! Pocatel, don't you think this would be a good place in which to make our head-quarters?" Ortiz seemed to enthuse as he looked about him.

"I do," agreed Pocatel, deliberately. "It is only one of similar circular oases in the plain, so may escape closer inspection by wandering Indians. Besides, we can just see the tableland we left behind from here. If we go farther afield we may never get into touch with our own people again."

No sooner had they resolved to establish a permanent camp than they began to make their plans. But first they cut their bear meat into strips, running it through with long skewers of willow, and placed it in the sun. They climbed to the top of the large square rock on the rising ground, where they could camp without fear of molestation from enemies —human or animal—and, as soon as they had allowed themselves a much-needed rest, they

Before the bear could turn, Pocatel was beside it, his spear raised ready to strike.

began to build a place in which to live. The first thing they did was to erect a species of roomy shelter or shed against the square rock. In the course of a month or so they had extended their living-house by taking in another side of the rock. At the end of another season they had built all round it. They looked upon it as a species of citadel to which they might retire in the event of a siege. It was significant to note how they could not at first altogether break away from the partiality of the Cliff Dwellers for something resembling a cliff side.

"What an improvement our new house is upon those old cliff dwellings!" observed Pocatel one day to his friend.

"I believe it is," agreed Ortiz, with an enthusiasm not quite so marked as his companion's. "However, I admit I miss some of our old friends. Fortunately, we have so many things to do that we haven't got too much time for regret."

"Our days are hardly long enough," observed Pocatel. "I grew so sick of the Frijoles canyon at times. You see, one's horizon—in more senses than one—was so limited there. Here we've got to chip new axe-heads, knives, and spear-heads, not to speak of having to hunt for our food before being able to cook it, and the more we work on our house the farther off it seems from completion."

"I don't believe it ever will be finished," declared Ortiz, laughingly. "Anyhow, what a pleasure it is to have a fine big place in which to move about in compared with some of our old communal rooms in which there was hardly space to turn."

They might also have said—which, of course, they did not—that they were both quite skilful workmen, and loved to plan and to build with stone, adobe—sun-dried bricks—and wood. It was wonderful what they could achieve with the aid of those razor-like flints. They had found a whole quarry of obsidian to their hand. So keen were they upon building

a house after their own heart and untrammelled by the restrictions of the communal type of abode that they gave their fancy rein, with the result that they evolved a house not so very unlike one of the present day. The look-out places were rudimentary windows. They heightened their doorways so that it was possible to walk underneath them without having to bend nearly double, and they contrived a fireplace and chimney which obviated their being blinded and choked with smoke. It was a wonderful thing this house, and owed nothing to soft lava-rock or an overhanging ledge. One old habit, however, that they could not overcome all at once was their preference for sitting on the roof in what scant leisure they had, instead of in the house itself. In their old communal home their rooms had been mostly used for storing their worldly possessions, and sleeping in when it rained or snowed.

"Do you know, Pocatel," said Ortiz, one day, "I'm in better health and spirits since I came to live in this new house of ours?"

"I'm sure of it," agreed Pocatel. "Hallo! look over there to the east. Do you see anything?"

"Indians from the direction of the rising sun!" exclaimed Ortiz.

"If they catch sight of us we may have to fight for it, and they are ten to one," cried Pocatel.

"Then we must barricade the doorways, which, fortunately, we've made so cunningly that one can't tell them from the walls. We've got a good supply of spears and bows and arrows. We can stand a siege. But first we must fill the skins with water, and gather in the meat."

They were very busy indeed for the next few minutes preparing for the trouble which they feared was imminent.

"I'm afraid that an attack from human enemies has been one great risk we haven't sufficiently taken into account," observed Ortiz.

"It is obvious that we haven't had much choice," commented Pocatel. "When we left the commune we knew what we had to face. It is just possible things would have gone harder with us had we stayed."

"They would have done so with me, anyhow," said Ortiz. "With you it might have been different. But let's get on to the rock and lie down flat so that we won't be likely to attract attention. We've got a good stock of arrows, fortunately."

They could see the Indians coming across the plain in a straggling line. There must have been twenty or more of them. Some carried burdens on their backs, others shouldered bows and spears. They seemed to be heading straight for the rock. When they were within a half-mile or so, the foremost Indians stopped so as to allow the others to come up. Their keen eyes had detected signs of occupation.

"They don't know quite what to do," observed Pocatel. "If they knew there were only a couple of us they would hardly hesitate."

"They are spreading out so as to approach us on all sides," said Ortiz. "I think the best thing we can do is to interview them, and perhaps make friends. I'll let them understand that I'll go out some little distance and talk with them."

"You are not going to do anything so foolhardy," declared Pocatel. "These are Apache Indians, as bloodthirsty as they are treacherous, and they will not only kill you but they will torture you before doing that. Believe me, I have had experience with them before now."

"Then it is no use waiting until they come right up to us," declared Ortiz. "We must hail them from here."

They both rose to their feet and signed to the approaching Indians to collect in one spot. But the only response was a defiant shout and a flight of arrows.

"They clearly mean to have us," said Ortiz, soberly. "They evidently hold us so cheaply that they haven't even troubled to resort to treachery. We must stop them before it is too late."

Now Ortiz had been known by his fellow Cliff Dwellers as "Sure Shot," and the bow he used was one of quite unusual strength and resiliency, so that when he drew it back and took aim something of a serious nature was bound to happen. "Let's give them another chance, Pocatel," he cried. "Sign to them that they must stop or we must let them have it."

But the only response was another flight of arrows which came dangerously near to wounding them both.

Ortiz raised himself on one knee and drew back the strong bear gut. Next moment an arrow whizzed through the air, and an Apache warrior flung out his arms and fell in a heap with a long flint-head buried in his breast. Pocatel also singled out his man, who happened to be coming in the opposite direction at a stealthy run. He too dropped in his tracks. But the two youths did not wait to watch the

effects of their aim. They fitted fresh arrows to the gut and drew them back again. Two more Indians stopped short, and spun round in agony.

"That will make them more careful," cried Ortiz. "But keep on shooting, Pocatel. It is our only chance."

To such good effect did the lads use bow and arrow that the attacking Indians imagined there must be other unseen bowmen about, and so retired behind rocks and stumps of trees. Owing to the height of the rock, and their care not to expose themselves more than they could help, the lads had as yet escaped injury.

"We must follow this advantage up, otherwise they will play a waiting game and starve us out," said Pocatel.

"We can't well leave the rock," declared Ortiz.

"They don't quite understand this house," observed Pocatel. "It is probably unlike anything they have ever seen before. They are not quite certain whether it is solid or only a shell. I think we might safely get inside and stand them off through the loop-holes we left for that purpose. They wouldn't be able to find them all at once."

"That's a good idea, Pocatel. Besides, it's getting a trifle too warm here. One of us is bound to get hit if we remain."

"Then let us get down. You take two sides and I'll take the other two. We can mount the rock by the ladder, and pull it up after us if they manage to force their way in. Quick with you, I believe they are preparing for a rush."

They were only just in time to station themselves at points where each could command two sides of their citadel. Several Indians had indeed closed in upon their stronghold, but owing to their uncertainty as to which part of the strange abode was likely to prove most vulnerable, they evinced considerable indecision when they reached its walls. For a minute or two they moved about in a stupid and uncertain fashion, handling the uprights and stones gingerly, utterly at a loss how to proceed with their attack. That was the opportunity for the lads.

The attackers must have been very considerably surprised when, from hitherto undreamt of openings and crevices, arrows and spears emerged, dealing dire punishment. Only one Indian managed to climb on to the roof, and he had the extraordinary bad luck to fall through the narrow open space, resembling a trap-door, which the lads had left so as to enable them to get on to the rock. He came down with a force that made Ortiz think that every bone in his body must be broken. Before he could rise again Pocatel had thrown a cloth over his head and tied it round his neck, so that the chances were he was unable to form any idea as to the sort of place into which he had fallen. When his hands were tied behind his back, he felt too sick and stupid to resist.

Luckily for the lads just then the Indians had deemed it prudent to withdraw, carrying away with them those who had come to grief. They must have been in a particularly perturbed condition of mind, for the lads noted that they retired to a hollow where the long, rank grass and reeds were dry as tinder. This would prove a very awkward spot in which to be caught in the event of a fire.

"I didn't think Indians could be so stupid as to get into a place like that," observed Pocatel. "As we have already said, we mustn't give them time to realise there are only two of us. We must set fire to the grass and burn them out."

"It is getting dark now," observed Ortiz, "so if we can creep out, set fire to the grass, and yell and make them believe that we are a big crowd, they may clear out and not trouble us any more."

"It seems a bold and risky thing to do," said Pocatel, "but there may be virtue in its very boldness. We can at least try. The question is what are we to do with our prisoner?"

"Keep him tied up until we come back, when we shall lead him out and start him off after his friends. The act of mercy may have some weight with them. They have only themselves to thank for the punishment they have already received."

The dusk had fallen swiftly, as it does south of the Rio Grande. It was necessary to act without delay. An enemy once on the move must be kept going if a victory is to prove decisive. Making their prisoner secure, they crept out, carrying fire-sticks shrouded in bark. Separating and crouching they approached the hollow ground into which the Indians had disappeared. Fortunately a brisk wind was blowing in the required direction. They must both have started their respective fires at the same moment, for, in less time than it takes to tell, two gussets of flame sprang up which broadened and spread with startling rapidity. Within two minutes there was a great front of fire roaring down the hollow. Quickly the lads started fires to the right and the left of them.

Then they shouted defiance for all they were worth from different points.

The Indians must have thought their intended victims had been reinforced, but they did not remain to find out whether this was the case or not. The fire, which was something they had not bargained for, was not conducive to calm and deliberate reflection. They must have attacked a position manned by a force considerably stronger than themselves. It surely was a cunning enemy to conceal its numbers and power until the attackers had practically destroyed themselves by a fatuous assault. The only thing left for them to do was to get clear away with their dead and wounded as speedily as their legs would carry them. There was no question of continuing the attack now. Their brother, that great warrior, Man-of-Might, who had mysteriously disappeared through the roof of the enemy's wigwam, must be left to save himself as best he could, if, indeed, he had not already started on that last long journey into the land of spirits. They shouted to their fellow warriors to retreat in a certain direction. Assisting their wounded they straightway took their departure to the north as quickly as circumstances permitted.

"We must go back to the house," said Ortiz to Pocatel, when they had joined each other again. "We must start our prisoner after his friends. It would be dangerous to keep him."

They led out Man-of-Might, still with the cloth over his head, and, seizing him by the arms, ran him in the direction of his retreating brethren. Although the ambitiously named warrior could not understand the admonition imparted, he could still comprehend that he was being treated mercifully. Once clear of the fire zone they untied his hands, and indicated that he must run in a given direction to rejoin his friends. Man-of-Might at once promptly started off with all the dispatch that his considerably shaken and bruised condition permitted.

"He didn't even trouble to remove the cloth from his head," observed Pocatel, laughing.

"He will manage to do that before he rejoins his friends now that his hands are untied," said Ortiz. "If you noticed he did not even risk offending our susceptibilities by as much as touching that cloth. I should say he is more of a diplomatist than a warrior."

They both had a good laugh, despite the fact that they had passed through a particularly trying time. Though it ought not to have been so, it came somewhat in the nature of a shock to realise that they were open to attack from bloodthirsty enemies. True, it was only by their comparative isolation in the canyons of the mesas that their people had generally avoided coming into open conflict with these wandering bands of Indians who came from the North and East. At the same time, the lads remembered that the Cliff Dwellers were never without scouts and outposts to warn them in the event of invasion.

"It is beginning to dawn upon me that we embarked on quite a hazardous enterprise coming to camp on these plains," commented Pocatel.

"Yes, we are in the enemy's country more or less," agreed Ortiz. "But then the enemy do nothing with their land. They simply hunt and go about trying to kill everyone they come across, so far as I can see. If our people, the Cliff Dwellers, only came to this place where there is so much fine land and good water, they would cultivate and make a garden of it. The people who can most improve a country have the best right to it."

"I only hope that our people wouldn't all become hunters, too, in which case we wouldn't be much better off than these Indians in the end," said Pocatel, cynically.

"Well, anyhow, I wish they'd come," said Ortiz. "We have had wonderful luck with the enemy, but it is unlikely that fortune will favour us as it has done another time. Here we are at the house. I think it would be a good plan to have something to eat. You see, it won't do to go to sleep while the enemy is about."

"I am with you," declared Pocatel. "We will roast yams in the ashes of the fire and that surely will keep us awake. Then we can keep watch by turns until daylight comes."

"That fire we started seems to have made headway," remarked Ortiz. "I expect the enemy must have found it inconvenient. But what about those yams?"

III

Ortiz and Pocatel were considerably perturbed when one day, two years later, they happened to be out hunting, and saw from a high rock a long string of human beings plodding over the plains.

"They come from the dry belt in the southwest," observed Ortiz. "They cannot be prairie Indians, they would not be guilty of such a stupid thing."

"They are travelling very slowly," observed Pocatel. "They must be suffering from thirst. They have probably been drinking from the alkali pools. I wonder what people would do such a foolish thing?"

"Our own, of course!" cried Ortiz, with sudden excitement. "It is our own people, the Cliff Dwellers, and those two years of drought have driven them from the canyons. They have started out to look for a fresh camping ground, have got into the dry belt, and here they are! I am so glad! Now things will all come right!"

When they afterwards came to think of it, it was an odd thing for them to do—to run shouting a welcome to those who had imprisoned them, and who afterwards must have looked upon them both as outlaws and fugitives from justice. True, the lads—now tall and strong of limb by reason of the strenuous life they had led—were just on the eve of starting on their way back to the Frijoles to let their people know what a fruitful and comparatively safe country lay at their very gates for the taking, but then the Cliff Dwellers were not to know that. Somehow, the lads now took it for granted that, seeing their predictions had come right, and that their people had been obliged to leave the dry mesas and valleys, the councillors would overlook the past and receive them into the commune again. In this surmise they were correct. They were, figuratively, received with open arms, and as relatives and kinsmen pressed round them, wondering at their strong and sturdy frames—they had both been such striplings when they had fled from the Frijoles—not a word was said either then or afterwards as to why they had broken prison.

When the Cliff Dwellers saw the home the two youths had made in the bluff on the prairie, they at once resolved to establish other such homes and villages. Thus it was that the Pueblo of Tesuque, as it is known at the present day, came into existence on the very spot on which the two lads had first camped. Moreover, the Cliff Dwellers, profiting by past experience, established other puebloes, with the result that that of Nambe, Poajaque, Taos, Picuris, and many others sprang into existence.

And that in the writer's humble opinion clears up the mystery of the disappearance the Cliff Dwellers. They were obliged to become Pueblo Indians on the plains alongside permanent bodies of water, and anyone travelling and visiting them (as the writer of this story did only last autumn) may have ample proof of the truth of this for himself.

THE END.

COMPETITION FOR NOVEMBER

An Interesting Contest in which all Captainites can take part.

"TWISTERS"

BELOW we print the names of twenty places which have come into prominence during the present war. In each case the letters have been purposely misplaced, and we want readers to put them in their right order. For example, the first word represented is Mons. At each of the places included below a battle, an assault, or some other incident of importance has taken place in connection with the war.

1. SMNO.
2. EOOUMDTNR.
3. SEULRAB.
4. EBEKRGNISOG.
5. VOLNIAU.
6. NZIZRAAB.
7. EEGIL.
8. UUMEEABG.
9. LLOAHNIGED.
10. ESTHOREBHRHE.
11. SELIMNA.
12. ISONGATT.
13. SAAMRD.
14. EGEDLARB.
15. RAWASOLJ.
16. NUASEMLUH.
17. NIKBUNSRC.
18. EACHHORK.
19. NEPORILA.
20. AFLATUCE.

First Prize in each class: Goods to the value of Half a Guinea.

Second Prize in each class: A Book by a CAPTAIN author.

RULES AND CONDITIONS.

1. The name, address, and age of the competitor must be written above his attempt.

2. The solutions must be written beneath each other in the same order as the names appear on the opposite column, and numbered.

3. Competitors will be divided into two classes, as follows: Class I.—Competitors sixteen years of age and over; Class II.—Competitors under sixteen.

4. Entries must be received not later than November 20th, addressed to the Competition Editor, THE CAPTAIN, 8, Southampton Street, Strand, London, W.C., the word "Twisters" being written in the top left-hand corner of the envelope.

5. The editor's decision must be accepted as final. In the event of a tie, neatness and age may be taken into consideration, or the value of the prizes may be divided, at the editor's discretion.

CONSOLATION PRIZES WILL ALSO BE AWARDED.

SOUTHAMPTON STREET, STRAND LONDON

The way to win! When in the early spring months of this year I decided to publish a series of articles which would aid a British victory in Berlin, I little thought that the necessity would arise that we should seek a triumph in the capital of the German Empire before two further years had elapsed. Now we know that we shall not have to wait till 1916 before we show the Kaiser's people that our alleged decadence was merely superficial, that we are able, have we but the will and the cause for it, to rise from our negligence and show the world that we are as strong in all things as ever we were. We had made up our minds to prove in Berlin that we could show the way to the rest of the world in the field of sport; the chance has come to show them our superiority on a sterner field—the field of war. I do not think we shall

A heavy howitzer of the Royal Field Artillery. [*L.N.A.*

have to wait till 1916 to demonstrate this fact to the Germans even in Berlin itself. We have shown in France that Britain can still breed men who have nothing to learn in fighting ability from any other country under the sun; the Germans have fled from our allies the French, they have fled from our allies the Russians, the little Belgians and the little Servians have made them run, too, but fastest of all they have fled from the British. I look forward confidently to that time when, at the point of the bayonet, we shall drive those legions, whose methods of savagery have been a disgrace to the name of war, nearer and nearer to Berlin, till at last the capital itself be humbled and peace be declared. May it be soon! May this ghastly war, made ghastlier far than any war need be by the fiendish barbarities of dishonourable foes, come to an end at the earliest possible moment. But there can be no moment earlier than the one which sees the cause of right triumphant in every particular, the moment that sees the vandals of Europe stripped of every vestige of power, and their vicious and false pride humbled for ever. I have trod in that fair land of France that they have pillaged; I have stood on the quiet hills and tried to picture the ancient days when the ruin of war was wont to be the regular fate of that sweet and peaceful country. I have dreamed and visualised bands of marauders battling in the valley of the Seine, marauders from every country on the Continent, marauders of every century, marauders who fought fiercely and without quarter given or required, who soaked the green fields red with blood; but never marauders so lost to honour, so drunk with the rage of war, that they wrecked the sacred House of God for their momentary amusement and their perpetual shame. For every cathedral on which a Krupp-made shell has burst, for every church that has known desecration at the hands of a soldier of the blasphemous Kaiser, atonement shall be made. Naught but a dire vengeance shall follow the nation whose army carries the unholy records of Rheims, Termonde, and Louvain.

A torpedo and torpedo-tube on a British warship. [*Record Press.*

Merry indeed would be our Christmas if we could simultaneously celebrate the declaration of peace, but that is a hope so faint that it is scarce worth

the consideration. I would that it were even possible that a general truce might be declared on the Day of Days, that hostilities might cease on the birthday of our Lord. "A merry Christmas!" this year will be a phrase which will jar on the ears of all those whose thoughts are continually with the brave men who are facing the rigours of war and the perils of death in trenches dug in a strange land. Though it is the duty of us all who remain at home, in the safety guaranteed us by our soldiers and sailors, to keep despondence from our hearts, it is still more our duty to keep a constant remembrance of those whose lives are purchasing our freedom. Happy though I trust the Christmas of every one of you may be, happy though yours be the home of one who has given his greatest gift to the country that bore him, happy and proud because you know he gave that gift as a Briton does, ungrudgingly and without fear,—merry for most of you it may not be. War is casting a shadow over all our hearts, over yours and mine. So I cannot tell you, as in previous years so often I have done, that our Christmas number will be a merry one, but I can assure you it will be a notable one. We shall be back at our full size for Christmas, and the number will be crowded with good things. Let me tell you the authors from whom the stories will be selected, and you will at once see the good fare there is in store. First there is Herbert Strang, who is now at work on a special war story; then there is R. S. Warren Bell, whose yarn, "Pay Day," is as bright a Greyhouse tale as any; Richard Bird has promised to send me a real good one; and Percy F. Westerman's already lies on the desk before me; Gunby Hadath and Augustus Muir have also been commissioned to contribute of their best; and A. B. Cooper has written a stirring article entitled "All That Was Left of Them," an article which tells the story of many deathless fights for the flag in every quarter of the earth. There will, of course, be many other stories and features, including a further series of drawings in "'The Captain' War Portfolio," and altogether the number which will be ready for you on Saturday, November 21st, will be a bumper—ninety-six pages of the very best. What? Sixpence, of course!

Record Press

Lieut. F. R. Foster, the famous cricketer, leading recruits in the University and Public Schools Corps to drill at Epsom.

Answers to Correspondents

MODELS

Captainite (Victoria, Australia) wants advice *re* the design of a boiler for a 1½in. by 1½in. vertical engine. If the engine is intended for really hard work, then a water-tube boiler, with what are known as "Field" tubes and fired by solid fuel coal and charcoal, is advised. The steam drum (horizontal) should be at least 6ins. diameter and 24ins. long. The Field tubes should be ⅝in. diameter with the concentric inner circulating tubes ⅜in. diameter. The total tube heating surface should be at least 800 square inches, and the fire-grate 6ins. wide by 14ins. long.

GENERAL

B. J. A. M. (Shooter's Hill).—You will see that your wish is gratified. How do you like Mr. Sewell's articles?

O. R. (Willesden).—Both the tales you mention were very popular, especially the latter. Glad you enjoyed them. We have often considered the question of a publication for Old Boys, but several ventures of the kind that have been made have met with but little success, and we have come to the conclusion that THE CAPTAIN makes a stronger appeal to Old Boys than would any magazine prepared for them exclusively.

Jacques Sinègre.—Very many thanks for your interesting letter. We are proud to know that British soldiers have aroused so much enthusiasm among your countrymen. At all times I am glad to hear from French readers of THE CAPTAIN, and their letters are especially welcome just now. Other French Captainites please note.

Enterprise suggests that an interview with the Kaiser on the subject of the war would make a fine article for the Christmas CAPTAIN. I fear, however, that Wilhelm's words on the war would be unprintable. We mustn't forget Mr. Censor, you know.

W. A. C. Moy.—Sorry we cannot use your article, as we have already dealt fully with photographic enlarging in past numbers.

R. F. Lewis.—If you look through your recent back numbers you will see that we have not abandoned our practice of publishing selections from the best attempts in our competitions. Not all contests, however, lend themselves to this treatment.

D. H. (Tring).—Very sorry, but I cannot give you the address of the gentleman in question.

Fighting Willy tells me that he thinks the war will be over by Christmas. I am willing to wager him a pudding that it isn't—though as "Fighting Willy" is going to the front himself he may hurry things up a bit. Anyway, I hope he enjoys his Christmas dinner wherever he may partake of it, and here's wishing him a safe and speedy return.

J. C. D. Whelan.—I have read scores of war poems lately, and yours, at any rate, is not the worst. But I haven't yet found one so superlatively good that I couldn't stop myself publishing it in THE CAPTAIN.

Expectant.—I dare say you'll get your gramophone all right, unless you tell your uncle that he reminds you of the Kaiser, or something equally tactless. Not all the gramophones come from Germany—and perhaps your neighbours won't be sorry that that source of supply is cut off. Yes, there is likely to be a famine in Noah's Arks this year, and I should think it would be better for the rising generation's notions of natural history if this becomes permanent. Still, if Britain captures the Noah's Ark trade these edifices in future may be stocked with sheep and cattle that look rather less like elongated four-legged stools than those of my own recollection.

Acknowledgments and thanks are also due to: **R. Roberts, T. E. Day, R. E. Macfadifen, S. D.** (Keighley), **Trombone, Recruit, W. Trotman, K. B.** (Aberdeen), **Patriot** (Australia).

THE OLD FAG

Mines at the stern of a gunboat. Great Britain has several mine-layers, and other vessels that can be adapted to this work. [*Cribb, Southsea.*

LONDON PREPARED FOR AERIAL ATTACK

Drawn by] *[Frank H. Mason, R.B.A.*

A British airship patrolling the sky above the metropolis, in the rays of powerful searchlights.

"If you make the slightest sound, I shall shoot you on the spot." The German turned with a start, and found himself covered by two revolvers.

THE PRISONERS OF THE CHATEAU

A Story of the War

By
HERBERT STRANG

Illustrated by
F. C. Dickinson

I

"MY compliments, Burton! You brought her down magnificently," said Captain Rolfe. "Not much damage done, I hope?"

The airman stooping over the engine grunted. In a moment or two a grimy face was upturned, the tall figure straightened itself, and a crisp voice said, ruefully:—

"Magneto smashed to smithereens!"

He passed round to the side of the machine, and retailed at short intervals the items of a catalogue of damage.

"A stay cut! . . . Two holes in the upper plane! . . . Four in the lower! . . . Chips and dents galore! Still, we can fall back on the old wife's consolation: it might have been worse."

"All the same, it's precious awkward," said Captain Rolfe, putting his finger through a hole in the lower plane. "The bosches will be here in ten minutes."

"Not under twenty. They've some difficult country to cross. But, of course, there's no time to lose. It's lucky there's a village close by."

Edward Burton, airman, with Captain Rolfe, who accompanied him as observer, had just made an enforced volplane and landed safely after running the gauntlet of German rifles and machine guns. At the moment when he was flattering himself on being out of range, a shell burst close beside the machine, bespattering it with bullets and nails, and putting the engine out of action.

Rolfe had seen cavalry galloping in their direction. The sudden descent would apprise the enemy of what had happened. Whether in ten minutes or in twenty, there was no doubt that the arrival of the Germans would place the airmen in a tight corner.

The first thought of the trooper is for his horse. The airman is concerned for the state of his aeroplane. It was not till long afterwards that Rolfe and Burton discovered that they too, had not come off unscathed. Luckily it was only Rolfe's sword-hilt that had been shattered, not his groin; while Burton examined with a wondering curiosity two neat black holes in the loose sleeve of his overalls.

It did not occur to either of them that there was at least plenty of time to slip away and hide before the Germans came up. Their instinct was to save the aeroplane—a hopeless proposition, one would have thought.

Along the road from the village, a quarter of a mile away, half the population was already speeding to the scene. The half, alas! was now the whole. There were women old and young, boys and girls, old men and men long past their prime; but there was no male person from seventeen to fifty except the village idiot, who flung his arms about as he ran, making inarticulate noises.

"Hang it all!" Burton ejaculated. "A crowd like this will dish any chance we might have had."

The crowd suddenly parted; the men doffed their hats, the women bobbed, as they made way for a horseman. It was an old straight figure, with short snow-white hair and a long grizzled moustache. He cantered through the throng, turned into the field on which the aeroplane lay, and reined up before the Englishmen.

"You have had an accident, messieurs?" he said, raising his hat.

"Worse than that, monsieur," replied Rolfe, in fluent French. "The Germans have hit us; the machine is useless; they are on our track."

"Ah!" exclaimed the Frenchman. Then, turning to the crowd who had flocked up behind him and stood gaping around, he spoke in quick, staccato phrases, in a tone of command. "Back to your houses, my good women. Take the children. These gentlemen are of our brave ally. You men, drag the aeroplane

to the inn. Bid Froment lift the trap-door of his cellar ready to let the machine down. Some of you smooth away the tracks behind it. Quick! You, Guignet, post yourself on the mound yonder and watch for the Germans. The inn cellar is large, messieurs; there will be plenty of room. As to yourselves——"

The wrinkles of his aged face deepened.

"Ah, I have it!" he exclaimed. Turning to Rolfe, he went on: "You are an English officer, monsieur; that says itself. You have observations to report. Take my horse; it is not mine, but borrowed from one of my tenants; my own are with the army. There is no other in the village. It will serve you."

"Thank you, monsieur," said Rolfe, as the old man dismounted. "In the interests of our forces——"

"Hasten, monsieur," the old man interrupted. "Guignet waves his arms. He has seen the Germans. As for you, monsieur——"

"I will go to the inn," said Burton.

"My chateau is at your service, monsieur, but I fear it will prove an unsafe refuge. A haystack, or a barn——"

"I must stay by the aeroplane, monsieur; get it repaired if possible."

The old man shrugged. Guignet came up.

"The bosches have taken the wrong road, monsieur le marquis," he said. "They are riding, *ma foi!* how quickly, towards old Lumineau's farm."

"That gives you more time," said the old gentleman to Burton. "Pray use it to save yourself. They will not be long discovering their mistake. Adieu! I salute in you your brave nation."

Bowing, he hurried away across the fields towards a large chateau that reared itself among noble trees half a mile distant. Burton followed the crowd towards the village inn.

"A fine old fellow!" he thought, "but he doesn't know the Germans if he supposes that the wine cellar will be a safe place. I must find somewhere better than that."

He overtook the men before they reached the village. Passing the ancient church, an idea occurred to him.

"Is there a crypt?" he asked.

"*Parfaitement, monsieur,*" a man replied.

"Halt a minute."

He hastened to the priest's house adjoining, at the door of which stood the curé in his biretta and long soutane. A minute's conversation settled the matter.

"It is a good cause, monsieur," said the curé. "Direct our good friends."

Superintended by Burton, the men wheeled the machine through the great door into the church. While Burton rapidly unscrewed the planes, willing hands opened up the floor, and in a quarter of an hour the aeroplane was lowered into the crypt.

"Is there an engineer in the village?" Burton asked.

"*Mais non, monsieur,* but there is Boitelet, the smith—a clever fellow, monsieur. You should have seen him set monsieur le capitaine's automobile to rights. Boitelet is your man."

Burton hurried to the smithy. Boitelet, a shaggy giant of fifty years or so, accompanied him back to the church.

"*Ah ça!*" he exclaimed on examining the engine. "I can repair it, yes; but I must go for material to the town, ten miles away. It will be a full day's work, and what is monsieur to do, with the bosches at hand?"

Burton thought quickly.

"Make me your assistant," he said after a minute or two. "I'll strip off my overalls and clothes; lend me things—a shirt and apron. A little more grease and dirt will disguise me."

"But monsieur is young," said the smith. "All our young men are at the war. The bosches will make you prisoner—shoot you, perhaps."

"An awkward situation, truly," said Burton, rubbing a greasy hand over his face. Suddenly he remembered the half-witted stripling among the crowd. Could he feign idiocy as an explanation of his presence in the village? He could mop and mow, but nothing could banish the gleam of intelligence from his eyes. And his tongue!—he spoke French fairly well, but his accent would inevitably betray him to any German who chanced to be a linguist.

"There is only one thing," he cried. "I must pretend to be deaf and dumb. Tell everybody, will you?"

"It is clever, monsieur; that idea of yours," said the smith, laughing. "Yes; you are Jules *le sourd-muet*, burning to fight, but rejected because you could never hear the word of command. But you must be careful, monsieur; a single slip, and—*voilà!*"

He shrugged his shoulder expressively.

"The bosches! The bosches!" screamed a group of frightened children, rushing up the street.

The people fled into their houses and shut the doors. Only the curé and the smith were visible, the latter standing at his door leaning on his hammer, with an angry frown upon his

swarthy face. Within the smithy Burton was making a rapid change of dress. He rolled up his own clothes and equipment and threw them into a corner behind a heap of old iron, and donned the dirty outer garments hurriedly provided by the smith. After a moment's hesitation he ferreted out his revolver case from the bundle, and slipped the revolver inside his blouse.

"If they search me, I'm done for," he thought. "But they would shoot the smith if they found the thing here, so it's as broad as it is long. The case must go up the chimney."

Then, completely transformed, he came to the door in time to see a troop of the Death's Head Hussars gallop up the street.

They reined up at the door of the smithy.

"Now, you dog, answer me," said the major in command. "And tell the truth, or I'll cut your tongue out. Have you seen an aeroplane hereabout?"

"*Oui da, mon colonel,*" replied the smith, with an ironical courtesy that delighted Burton. "I did see an aeroplane, it might be an hour ago. It came down close to those poplars yonder, but rose in a minute or two and sailed away to the west."

"Go and see if he is telling the truth," said the officer to two of his men. "And you, smith, look to my horse's shoes. Who is this young fellow? A deserter? a coward?"

"Oh, he's brave enough, *mon colonel,*" the smith answered. "But the poor wretch is deaf and dumb, a sore trouble to himself and his friends. You may shout, and he will not hear you; and as to asking for his dinner, he can't do it. I only employ him out of compassion."

The officer glanced at Burton, who was trying to assume that pathetically eager expression, that busy inquiry of the eyes, which characterises deaf mutes.

"If he were a German we'd make him shoot, deaf or not," said the major. "You French are too weak. Well?"

The troopers had returned, and sat their horses rigidly at the salute.

"Without doubt an aeroplane descended there Herr Major," one of them reported, "and it flew up again, for there are no more tracks."

"It is not worth while continuing the chase. Night is coming on. Quarter yourselves in the village—and keep the people quiet. No one is to leave his house."

The troopers saluted and rode off, leaving a captain, two lieutenants, and four orderlies with the major.

"Look alive, smith," cried that officer, in the domineering tone evidently habitual with him. "Are the shoes in good order?"

The smith turned up the hoofs one after another, and pronounced them perfectly shod.

"Very well; if any of the troopers' horses need shoeing, see that it is done promptly, or it will be the worse for you. Now for the chateau, gentlemen; monsieur le marquis will be delighted to entertain us."

There was upon his face a look that Burton could not fathom—an ugly smile that made him shiver. The horsemen rode away, and Boitelet, the smith, spat upon the ground.

II

"COME inside, monsieur," murmured the smith, glancing round to see that no German was within hearing. Then he threw up his hands and groaned.

"He is an insolent hound," said Burton, sympathetically.

"Ah, monsieur, it is not that; all these Prussians are brutes. I fear for monsieur le marquis."

"Who is the marquis? He has a soldierly look."

"He was a fine soldier, monsieur. Every Frenchman knows his name. In the army he was plain General du Breuil; here in his own country, where we love him, we give him his true title, that has come to him from the days of long ago. Ah! there is great trouble for him. I know that man'

"The major?"

"Major he may be; spy he was. It is clear. Listen, monsieur. Some three years ago, before monsieur le marquis retired from the army, he had in his service a secretary, said to be an Alsatian, very useful to monsieur, who was compiling his memoirs. One day he was dismissed, none of us knew why. Monsieur le marquis had discovered something, no doubt. There was a violent scene at the chateau. Monsieur's son, Captain du Breuil, kicked the secretary down the steps of the chateau. He came into the village, hired a *calèche* to drive him to the station, and departed. We have seen no more of him until this day. He is the major."

"You are sure?"

"It is certain, monsieur. He was then clean shaven, and now wears a moustache, but I know the scar on his cheek."

"And you fear he will insult the marquis?"

"Worse than that, monsieur. A few days

ago monsieur le capitaine, brave soldier like his father, was wounded in action only a mile or two away, when our gallant cuirassiers charged the bosches and drove them helter-skelter from their trenches. He was found on the field by old Guignet, and carried secretly to the chateau, and there he lies, horribly hurt by shrapnel."

"And now they will make him prisoner?"

"That would be bad enough, but I fear worse. The bosches are brutal to all. What must we expect from a man who has a grudge to pay off, and finds his enemy helpless in his clutches? The major will not forgive his kicking."

"It's a bad look-out, certainly," said Burton. "I like your old general; he came to our help so quickly. But what about my engine?"

"*Ah, oui, monsieur*, it is a pity. I dare not leave the village now. The bosches passed quickly through here in their retreat a few days ago; I did not expect to see their ugly faces again. You must wait, monsieur. Come into my house, and share our soup. If God pleases, the hounds will go again to-morrow."

Burton accepted the good man's offer of hospitality, and shared a simple meal with him, and his wife, and two wide-eyed children who gazed with interest at the stranger.

When the meal was nearly finished, the smith suddenly exclaimed:—

"Ah! here comes old Pierre, with a German. Have a care, monsieur. Remember you are deaf and dumb."

Looking out of the window into the darkling street, Burton saw a bent old man tottering along by the side of one of the orderlies who had recently ridden away.

"They are not coming here, *Dieu merci!*" said the smith at his elbow. "They are going to the butcher's. These Germans eat like hogs."

"Who is the old man?" Burton asked.

"Servant of monsieur le marquis, monsieur. They have grown old together. There is no other left in the chateau. Some are at the war; the rest fled, maids and men, when the Germans came before. Ah! it is sad for monsieur and madame in their old age, and their son lying wounded, too."

The old serving man passed from the butcher's to the baker's, and thence to other shops, with the orderly always at his side. Soon the old man was staggering under a load of purchases. He faltered and stopped, and the orderly shouted at him, and threatened him with his sword. Burton's blood boiled. He would have liked to catch the German by the neck and shake him until he howled for mercy.

Then an idea struck him. If he offered to help the laden old man he would make some return for the general's kindness; perhaps he might be of some further service in the chateau. He made the suggestion to the smith.

"It is madness, monsieur. You would put your head into the lion's mouth."

"What more natural than that a deaf-mute should earn a sou by using his muscles? Arrange it, my friend."

"They say you English are mad, monsieur," said the smith with a shrug. "*A la bonne heure!* But you will get more kicks than sous."

"Make an opportunity to tell the old man that I am deaf and dumb, and that he is to pretend he knows me. He must inform his master and mistress also. Will he be discreet?"

"He will be anything you please for the sake of monsieur le marquis. Come, then, monsieur."

They left the house, and came upon the scene just as the orderly had terrorised the old man into making another attempt to carry his burden. The smith soon discovered that the orderly knew no French. He arranged the matter by signs, pointing to Burton's mouth and ears, and indicating that he was muscularly strong. At the same time he spoke rapidly in French to old Pierre.

"*Ah, bon, bon!*" said the old man. "I understand perfectly. Be sure I will tell the master. Monsieur may rely upon me."

Burton shouldered more than half the load, and set off for the chateau side by side with Pierre, the orderly following.

III

The Chateau du Breuil had been luckier than many similar country houses that stood in the line of the German advance. Whether by accident or a rare considerateness, it had not been shelled, and the officer who had last quartered himself there, though a German, was also a gentleman. It stood, a noble building, in its little park, whole and intact as the first marquis built it in the reign of Henri Quatre.

At either end was a projecting wing of two stories, the wings being connected by the long one-storied building that contained the living rooms. Burton found the part of deaf-mute irksome; he wished to question old Pierre as to the quarters in which the Germans had disposed themselves. But he perforce

kept silence, listening to a fragmentary dialogue in German between the orderly and Pierre, who, as he afterwards learnt, had been valet to the marquis when the latter, as a young man, was military attaché to the French embassy at Berlin.

They arrived at the kitchen entrance. Pierre went in first, and at once addressed an old white-haired lady who was stuffing a chicken at the kitchen table. He spoke so rapidly and in so low a tone that Burton could not follow his words, but he gathered their purport when the old lady glanced at him, and signed to him to lay down his load on the table.

"Madame la marquise has understood," he thought.

The orderly waited awhile; then, seeing that the lady had set Pierre and the deaf mute to pare potatoes and turnips, he went off to report that preparations for dinner were at last in train.

"A thousand thanks, monsieur," whispered the marquise when the German's back was turned. "It was good of you to help old Pierre. But, believe me, it is unwise of you to stay. If you should be discovered— If you made a slip——"

"Madame, to run risks is my daily work," said Burton. "I am glad to serve you—even in the capacity of kitchen-maid."

The marquise smiled wearily.

"We are playing strange parts, God help us!" she said. "I am in great distress, monsieur. The German officer——"

"Boitelet has told me about him, madame," said Burton. "Pardon: I interrupt; but we may have little time. Will you tell me what has happened?"

"My poor son! They dismissed our good doctor who was attending him; they carried him, ill as he is, from his own room to one of the servants' rooms, and there they have locked him in with my husband. It is on the floor above us. They have taken our rooms in the other wing for themselves. They have ransacked the wine cellar, and loaded the table in the dining-room with my poor husband's finest vintage. But it is not what they have done but what they may do that fills me with dread. That horrible man——"

"You are insolent," cried the German, angered at the old man's reply, and struck him across the face.

Old Pierre, who was standing near the door, at this moment put his finger quickly to his lips. When the orderly entered, the marquise

was turning the chicken on the spit, and Burton was cleaning the knives.

"The old frau is slow," said the German to Pierre. "The officers are growing impatient. She had better hurry, or there will be trouble."

"Madame la marquise will serve the dinner when it is ready," said Pierre, quietly.

"*Teufel!* You are insolent," cried the orderly, striking the old man across the face.

Burton smothered the exclamation that rose to his lips. The marquise flashed at the German such a look of indignant scorn that he was abashed, and went out muttering sullenly.

"The visit of that horrible man," the old lady went on, ignoring the underling's brutality, "is not accidental, I am sure. He contemplates vengeance. He was dismissed with contumely, and I fear he will make my poor son pay."

Burton could only murmur his sympathy. He watched with admiration the quick, deft actions of the marquise, who prepared the dinner as skilfully as her own cook could have done.

There was no opportunity for further conversation. The orderly returned, and lolled in a chair, commenting on the old lady's movements in offensive tones that made Burton tingle. When the dishes were ready, the marquise told Pierre to carry them in.

"No, no, old witch," said the orderly, with a chuckle. "The herr major is very particular; she must serve him herself."

Pierre translated this to his mistress, protesting that she must not submit to such indignity.

"*Eh bien, mon ami,*" she said, "they cannot hurt me more. For my son's sake I will be cook and *bonne* in one. Carry the dishes; I will show them how a marquise waits at table."

Burton assisted the old man to convey the dishes to the dining-room, following the marquise. At their entrance there was a shout of laughter. Four officers sat at the table—the major, his captain, and two moon-faced lieutenants.

"Where are your cap and apron, wench?" cried the major. "Go and put them on at once. And make that dumb dog there understand that he is not to bring his dirty face inside; he can hand the things to you through the hatch."

The marquise compressed her lips, and, without replying, returned to the kitchen, and came back in a maid's cap and apron. What was meant for indignity and insult seemed to Burton, watching from the hatch, to enhance the lady's dignity. She moved about the table with the quickness of a waiting maid and the proud bearing of a queen, paying no heed to the coarse pleasantries of the Germans, or to their complaints of the food, of which, nevertheless, they devoured large quantities.

"A tough fowl, this," said the major, "as old as the old hen herself."

"Ha, ha!" laughed his juniors, in whom the champagne they had already drunk induced a facile admiration of the major's wit.

As the meal progressed, and the Germans' potations deepened, their manners went from bad to worse. They commenced an orgy of plate-smashing, flinging pellets of damp bread at one another and at pictures on the walls. Burton's fingers tingled; from his place at the hatch he could have shot them one by one with the revolver that lay snug in his blouse. But he contained his anger. The four orderlies were in an adjacent room; the village was filled with the troopers; and hasty action would probably involve the destruction of the chateau and the massacre of its long-suffering inhabitants.

Presently they called for coffee, and the major went to the marquis's cigar cupboard, promising his subordinates the best smoke of their lives. The champagne seemed to have affected him less than the other members of the party, and Burton gained the impression that he was holding himself in for the accomplishment of some sinister purpose.

Dismissing the marquise with a curt and contemptuous "*Gehen Sie aus,*" he called in an orderly to lock her in the upper room with her husband and son.

"Now get your own suppers and turn in," he said. "You may be disturbed; the sneaking Englishmen are somewhere in the neighbourhood; so keep a man on guard to give warning, and post a sentry in the corridor. Send Vossling to me."

His own orderly entered. The major opened a fresh bottle, and passed it round the table; then with a "*Verzeihen Sie mir*" to his companions, he rose, and took the man into the passage out of earshot. Burton had slipped back into the kitchen; the passage appeared to be vacant.

A few minutes later old Pierre, his face blanched to the colour of chalk, staggered into the kitchen.

"What is the matter?" asked Burton, alarmed.

He poured out a little brandy, and held the glass to the old man's pale and quivering lips.

Pierre gulped the liquid, looked around with horror in his eyes, and signed to Burton to throw the door wide open.

"They must not know, monsieur," he said in a whisper, tottering to a chair.

"What is the matter?" Burton repeated.

"I was in the passage, I heard them coming. They are not there, monsieur?"

"No, there is no one," said Burton, looking out through the open door.

"I slipped into the dark ante-room, monsieur, and hid behind the tall clock. They came in."

"Who?"

"The major—Schwikkard, the accursed spy, and his man. I heard what they said. 'The old marquis is a bitter enemy of Germany,' said Schwikkard, 'He fought against us in '70. He is a dangerous man. Now, if the west wing of the chateau caught fire—*caught fire*, you understand—say, in the early morning' . . . They are not there, monsieur?"

"No. Go on."

"'Caught fire'! he said. *Mon Dieu!* 'In the early morning—not too early, for that would disturb the sleep of some good Germans; but not too late, for that would bring the whole village here. If the west wing were burned, and all in it'—*all in it*, monsieur! 'it would be a good thing for Germany. Understand,' he said, 'it will be an accident. We should all try to put the fire out, but we should not succeed, naturally. These old places burn well. You understand? Well then, good night—and see that you don't call me too soon—*versteht sich!*' The orderly chuckled, monsieur. *Mon Dieu! Monsieur et madame, le pauvre capitaine! Ah ciel! Quelle horreur!*"

IV

The old man sank back in his chair, half fainting. Burton gave him more brandy. Aghast at the atrocious villainy of the scheme—incredible but for the crimes which had already stained the German arms—he was for the moment unable to think of anything but the scene he saw in imagination—flames illuminating the dawn, eating away the staircase, enclosing the three helpless people above in a fiery furnace.

The old man groaned aloud.

"Take care!" whispered Burton. "Tell me, are there arms in the house?"

"Why, yes, monsieur; a rifle and two revolvers, in the captain's room—well hidden, *par exemple!*"

"Is there a back staircase to the upper rooms?"

"By that door yonder, monsieur," replied Pierre, pointing to a small door in the corner.

"If anybody comes and asks about me, say that I have gone home. Pull yourself together for the sake of monsieur and madame."

"But, monsieur——"

"Chut! The party is breaking up. Listen! They are going to their rooms in the east wing. Courage, my friend!"

He extinguished the oil lamp, pressed Pierre's hand, and stole noiselessly through the door in the corner. It opened to a narrow staircase. At the head of this there was a passage leading between bedrooms to the main staircase farther along. There was no lamp in the passage, but a faint shine through a skylight lit dimly its farther end. And just as Burton gained the top step, and peered cautiously round the edge of the wall, he was amazed to see Major Schwikkard unlock a door on the left, and enter the room.

"Go into the next room," came the curt command in French.

"Monsieur, I cannot leave my son," protested the marquise. "Have you no humanity at all?"

"Gabble is useless. Go into the next room, and take the old man with you. Or shall I shoot him before your eyes?"

The two old people came into the passage, followed by the major, who hustled them into the adjoining apartment, locked them in, and returned. Burton, dreading lest he intended to proceed at once to extremes with the wounded man, and resolved at any cost to prevent it, darted on tip-toe along the passage to the room in which the marquis and his wife were shut up, silently unlocked the door, and whispering. "Courage, *monsieur et madame*. Await my return," he left them, and went to the next door. It was closed.

Through it he heard the German's voice. It was no time to shirk risks. Grasping the handle firmly, he turned it, and gently pushed the door, little by little, until he could see into the room.

The German was seated on a chair by the bedside, his back to the door, ostentatiously cutting a fresh cigar. Beside him was a small cabinet with medicines. On it he had laid his revolver, out of the reach of the young soldier on the bed. They presented a strange contrast, the blond, bulky German, red-faced, brimming with physical energy, and the Frenchman, whose eyes, feverishly bright, gleamed out of pale sunken cheeks, and whose emaciated hands lay idle on the coverlet. His dark head

propped on the pillow, he lay perfectly still, corpse-like save for his burning eyes.

"An excellent cigar!" said the German. "Who should know that better than I? Once more I am indebted to your amiable parents for their hospitality. I make my acknowledgments. Madame la marquise has been most attentive; she looked charming, if a little faded, in cap and apron; and you would have been delighted to see her handing the plates."

The invalid's fingers twitched; a flush mantled his cheeks. He tried to lift his head, but it sank back weakly upon the pillow. Burton felt that the German was watching his victim with malicious satisfaction. The shaft had struck home.

"Don't rise, don't rise, my dear sir. I realise how little our good German shells suit the constitution of you Frenchmen. You have no stamina, you know: a puff"—he blew out a cloud of smoke—"and you are gone!

"You scarcely hoped, perhaps, to see me again after our last parting at the gates of your hospitable chateau? You find it, perhaps, a strange chance that brings me again beneath this roof? Yet perhaps it is not so strange after all, for, helpless though I was at the time, I vowed that some day or other I would return. And thus we meet, sooner than I could have hoped—our parts somewhat changed. I was then a helpless German in France; you are now a helpless Frenchman in what is going to be Germany. When you were up and I was down, you heaped upon me insults and abuse, and struck me—me, a well-born Prussian!—because I did my duty to my country. Did you reflect? Did it ever cross your French mind that a German, a Junker, a soldier, a man of culture, would not brook the insolent perversity of one of your decadent race? Now I am up and you are down, and we can square accounts. You are to learn what it is to strike a German. Of this your chateau, of you and the vile French brood within it, there shall not remain to-morrow aught but ashes. That is what I have promised myself these three years. I will pay my vow!"

During this speech, hissed out in a tone of the bitterest rancour, the German had held his cigar between finger and thumb, lifting his hand now and then to emphasise his words. Perceiving that it had gone out, he cut another, lit it, and lolled insolently in his chair, his long legs stretched beneath the bed, as if gloating over his intended victim. The young captain had not uttered a word. No change of countenance revealed his feelings, or so much hinted that he had heard the German's tirade. His eyes appeared to look past his tormentor, but nothing in their expression warned him of what he saw.

There was a brief interval of silence; then the German drew up his legs.

"Sleep well!" he said. "I assure you your sleep shall be a long one!"

He flicked the ash of his cigar into one of the medicine glasses, and was about to rise, when a hand shot over his shoulder, and grasped his revolver. Turning on his chair with a start, he flinched as his right ear touched the cold muzzle of a second revolver which Burton pointed at him.

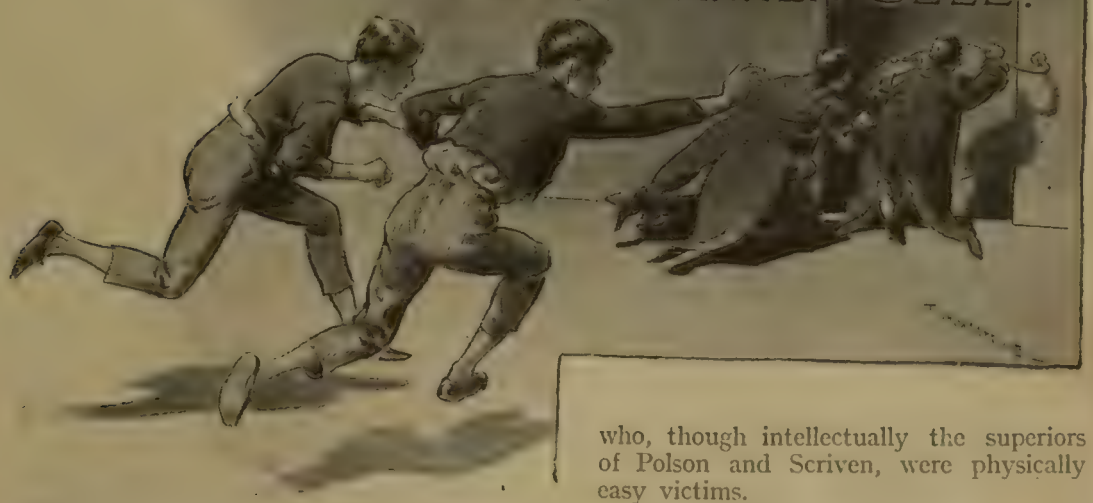
"Sit down!" said Burton, quietly, in French. "If you make the slightest sound, I will shoot you on the spot."

The German's face blanched, under its suntan. A muzzle to the right, a muzzle to the left, each within a few inches of his head! Speechless, he sank down into his chair, and the cigar fell upon the floor.

(To be concluded next month)

PAY DAY

By R. S. WARREN BELL.



The twins turned and bolted like hares for the spiral staircase

I

IT was the eve of pay day—last day of term at Greyhouse School—and various scholars of that establishment were planning reprisals on persons who had given them offence during the past three months.

Last day but one,
Take it all in fun;
Last day,
Pay Day,

ran the old rhyme, and the payments took divers shapes, according to the nature of the paymasters and the sins to be expiated.

Polson and Scriven, two middle-sized boys of the Upper Fourth, were checking their accounts. Addicted to "ragging," they often ran counter to authority, and the scores they had to settle were mainly with boys too large and powerful to attack in any but the most insidious manner. Of such the ones who stood out most boldly in relief against a sinful background were Boulter and Pyke, "raggers" themselves, and rough ones, being several years older, several inches taller, and in all other ways the seniors of Polson and Scriven. Getting even with "B-P," as they were called, was a matter requiring deep thought. Not so, however, with the Calthorpe twins, Rollo and Ralph, who, though intellectually the superiors of Polson and Scriven, were physically easy victims.

Letting Boulter and Pyke go for the moment, therefore, Polson and Scriven concentrated on the Twins. What form should their payment take on this particular day? Scriven, the brains of the partnership—as opposed to Polson, the muscle—suggested several devices which, however, possessed a meanness that did not render them palatable to Polson, a bullet-headed fellow of direct methods.

All of a sudden Polson slapped his chum on the back. "This time, Sambo," he said, "it is *my* idea! I think we can get back at the four of 'em at one fell blow."

Scriven looked a little surprised. As the brains of the partnership the ideas nearly all emanated from himself, and he was wondering what had made Polson all of a sudden so intellectual.

"To-day," said Polson, "we are wearing the same togs as we shall wear to-morrow. All other clothes have been seized by the Paget woman, and placed in our boxes. What we stand up in to-day we go away in to-morrow."

"Why are you ringing all this chestnutty stuff on to me?" demanded Scriven.

"I want you to grapple with the immensity of the idea," said Polson, putting his arm round his chum's neck. "In case anyone is listening, let me breathe it into your ear."

Scriven, all unsuspecting, lent his ear,

whereupon Polson shouted at the top of his voice, "*We'll swop their clothes.*"

Scriven disengaged himself from his friend's clutch as if he had been hit by a shell. Polson gurgled with laughter.

"Steady on, you know," exclaimed Scriven; "that was my ear-drum, you know. Beastly silly thing, playing tricks like that. Might deafen a man for life." He nursed his ear for a bit; then he asked: "What was it you were saying about clothes? I was too near to hear you."

Polson lodged his elbow on the desk, and held up his forefinger.

"The thing is as simple as A B C. Boulter and Pyke are about six feet apiece, aren't they?" Scriven nodded. "The Twins are about three feet nothing?"

"At a liberal estimate."

"Very well," said Polson. "At dead of night, when the school is hushed in slumber, and there's absolutely nobody about to see us, we will take our electric torch, we will seize the nice going-away clothes of the Twins, we will take them up to the dormitory of Boulter and Pyke, and we will bring down the clothes of Boulter and Pyke and hang them up by the Twins' beds. In the morning these four merchants will wake——"

"The Twins about half an hour before the other two," put in Scriven.

"Very likely," agreed Polson.

"So that's the weak part about it," continued Scriven. "They will find the names of Boulter and Pyke in the clothes, and return them forthwith. Done in the eye, Polly; done in the eye!"

"You haven't thought it out like I have," said Polson, complacently.

"Not having it to think out," objected Scriven, in a peevish tone, "how could I?"

"Yes, I have the advantage of you there," admitted Polson. "Well now, listen: What is easier than to take out the tapes on which their names are written? With your sharp penknife, Sammy, that will be the work of a moment."

"Yes," objected Scriven, "but even if they don't know who the togs belong to they'll go shouting through every room till they find out."

"I have thought of that. You must remember how soundly B-P sleep. Bellow the Twins never so loudly, B-P won't take the slightest notice until some of their pals tell them their train starts in half an hour." Polson doubled up. "Ye gods! Can't you see them getting into the Twins' pigmy trousers! Can't you see them fuming when they are thrusting their large, inhuman arms into those tiny Eton jackets with the knowledge, my Sammy, with the knowledge that it means a four hours' wait in London —or something like that—if they miss their train!"

"It's a great idea!" said Scriven, falling on his chum's neck. And they enjoyed a hearty hug.

Nevertheless, it was not a scheme that lent itself to easy execution. There was always the fear, in the first place, that they might be caught; in the second place, there was the remote possibility of Boulter and Pyke getting up a little earlier than usual on going-away day. In any case, each couple, on discovering the fraud, would make for the matron's room and ask for another suit, though it would be improbable that they would get it, as the luggage by that time would be ready for travel. There were, in fact, heaps of difficulties in the way; but Polson and Scriven would not have earned the name they had for "ragging" had they not carried out some very successful ventures of a not dissimilar nature.

During the rest of the day the chums matured their plans. Wandering upstairs —as they were allowed to do on this last day—they noted carefully the positions of Boulter and Pyke's beds, so as to avoid stumbling against corners of washstands. They noted the hooks on which the clothes would be hanging. They saw that their electric torch was in good order.

Meanwhile, having this method of payment cut and dried, they left the Calthorpe twins severely alone, whereat Rollo and Ralph were a little surprised, for they had fully expected some small attention from Polson and Scriven. But no, not a word. Just cordiality, let bygones be bygones, we're filled with the spirit of Christmas-time. The Twins began to think that Polson and Scriven weren't such bad fellows after all, and gave them some chocolate and some foreign stamps which would have been dear at a penny for twenty.

II

PAY DAY wore on. In these enlightened times there was not so very much paying, and it was nearly all of a good-humoured nature. Some boy who had made himself

unpopular would be court-martialled by a dozen others, and so forth.

Having their great rag to perform at night, Polson and Scriven spent a quiet day, much like pugilists due to appear in the ring at 10 p.m. They did not, however, in any way alter their diet. Don't think that.

Meanwhile various other people at Greyhouse School were making up their payments. Mr. Street, junior house-master of School House, had all sorts of accounts to tot up. He was treasurer of various little common-room funds established for the supply of tobacco, golf balls, cake, and liquid refreshments. Then, again, it was his duty on the following morning to hand out its travelling money to the House. This meant a visit to the bank at Lipsham in the afternoon in order to obtain cash for the cheques and postal-orders he had received from parents.

He took with him and brought back with him one Stanhope, a prim boy, good at figuring, who helped him with the accounts. It had never been quite understood why Mr. Street had changed his secretary, for at the beginning of the term he had been helped by a boy called Cheriton, a quiet, hard-working fellow who had come to Greyhouse with a scholarship, his father being a clergyman in the East End of London with a limited income. In fact, Cheriton had always felt his position a little owing to his shortness of means among boys who had plenty. Perhaps it would have been better for him to have gone to a school where the boys came of a less affluent class. However, there he was, and he had got to go through the school somehow.

In rather a sad way Cheriton had watched Mr. Street and Stanhope go down the drive on their way to Lipsham. There was just a little bit of a cloud over him, as a result of being so suddenly dropped by Mr. Street in favour of Stanhope. Of course, some masters are like that—a bit fickle; but it ought to be mentioned that early in the term Mr. Street had found himself short in his accounts by a sovereign, and Cheriton had been helping him at the time, and—really, it was a little puzzling and annoying—but there *was* a sovereign short. Mr. Street felt quite sure that he had had so much money in a certain pocket on a certain day after he had changed back out of his tennis clothes. It was money belonging to some fund of which he was treasurer. Mr. Street said nothing, but he came to the conclusion that Cheriton required a little more fresh air. Perhaps assisting with the accounts kept him from needful recreation. Cheriton looked too pale, he said. And then, Cheriton was working very hard to get out of the Upper Fourth into the Lower Fifth. It was time he did so, being fifteen and a half.

Anyhow, when a week or so had elapsed after the loss of the sovereign (which, of course, Mr. Street had to make up out of his own pocket) the master engaged a new secretary. You will understand, therefore, that, although nothing was said, nor, among the majority of the boys, even suspected, there was just a little cloud over Cheriton. He hadn't many friends, and he was not going to stay with anybody this Christmas, as a good many fellows were going to do. He would just hang about at home in the East End for five weeks, and then return to school after a dull time.

Polson saw Cheriton gazing out of the Fourth Form window in a rather doleful way. "Buck up, my hearty," he said. "You look as if you had taken summat as didn't agree with you." Cheriton smiled in a rather depressed way, and went out.

"Sorry for old Cherry," said Polson to Scriven. "He don't have much of a time, do 'e? Sort of born miserable, eh, Sammy, don't you think, just as you were born unfriendly looking?"

Fortunately Scriven was accustomed to these personal remarks.

Well, Mr. Street and Stanhope came bustling back from the bank with a nice load of money, and then they got a large sheet of paper, and Stanhope wrote down the amount to be paid to each boy in the morning, and Mr. Street balanced his cash against this list. This money concerned the boys only in the School House, and amounted to over a hundred pounds.

"Quite a nice little sum of money for anybody to run off with, eh, Stanhope?" said Mr. Street. "So now's your chance if you want to make a bolt for America!"

Stanhope smiled gratefully. It does rather buck you up to be chaffed by a master.

"And now, Stanhope," added Mr. Street, "we will just go through the games accounts and the tuck-shop accounts. I can manage the rest by myself, as, of course, you will like to go into the sing-song after tea."

"Oh, I'll come and help you if you *like*, sir," said Stanhope, in that prim way of his that Polson and Scriven so detested.

"No, Stanhope, you go into the sing-song," said Mr. Street, in the tone of a man taking a great burden upon himself. "I can manage all right."

The Christmas sing-song was much like other sing-songs—remarkable rather for the enthusiasm displayed in the choruses than for the excellence of the solos. A one-act comedy, written by Savatard, editor of the *Grey*, was performed by the prefects, but it was distinguished for the wittiness of its dialogue rather than for brisk action and diverting situations, and it fell rather flat. A young lady of the neighbourhood named Miss Ida Smith, but known to the school, on account of her ample build, as "Mount Ida," sang "I Hear You Calling Me."

"Who is the bold man?" demanded Boulter, giving Pyke a horse-bite; and a prefect had to stop the scrap that ensued.

The Calthorpe twins obliged with a violin duet to a running fire of chaff; and Johnson, a prefect with a big voice and square jaw, recited Kipling's, "Back to the Army, Sergeant," in a way which evoked frenzied cat-calls of applause. Changing his tone and manner with fine artistic sense, Johnson rendered as *encore* Chevalier's touching little piece, "A Poor Old Bachelor." At its conclusion Pyke fell with a sob on Boulter's neck, and Marston, the school full-back, turned on them with a savage, "Shut up, you fools!" Strange how these garishly sentimental pieces move strong men like Marston!

Pickering, the choir treble soloist, was really excellent in "At My Window"—a girl's song, but no matter; the school band set every head nodding and toe beating with the Nell Gwynne dances; Talmage, the second prefect, brilliant in everything he did, and original in his choice of material, electrified the house with his description of Hereward the Wake's last and greatest fight, from the pages of grand old Charles Kingsley; and the school choir thought they had wound up the programme with "Sweet and Low," when Boulter or somebody started "Auld Lang Syne"; and there was everybody with his arms linked roaring at the top of his voice, while the pianist—one of the Sixth—produced wonderful chords with no regard for the poor piano wires.

After which Pyke bellows, "Phillips! *Speech!*" Everybody shrieks, "*Speech!*" and Phillips, the school captain, modest and blushing, is pulled and pushed on to the platform, where he simply says, "Pleasant holidays, everyone!" and dives out of sight; and amid a hubbub of laughter and cheering and chaff Greyhouse streams out to bed, everybody happy and smiling in anticipation of the holidays which to-morrow ushers in.

That is, nearly everybody. Some, as warned by letters, will go to homes hushed by sickness; and one, Cheriton, is moody and alone. For is he not still under a cloud? Nothing has been said, no accusation has been levelled at him; to all intents and purposes his industrious record is clean as a new-wiped slate.

Yet he is under that little cloud. Never one to make friends, he threads his way quietly through the chattering mob, and so seeks his couch and the pillow which is the *confidante* of so many silent and secret griefs.

III

THE last "good night" had been drowsily uttered, and Greyhouse was really asleep. With to-morrow's journeys north, south, east and west to be taken, the masters, too, had at length separated, and the common-room lights were out. Even Miss Paget, the School House matron, and her heavy-eyed maids had desisted from their packing labours, which they would recommence long before they had daylight to help them. Two lights only burnt, the red one in the head master's study, and that in Mr. Street's room. Finally, Mr. Street's light was the only one burning in School House.

Mr. Street, who had not been able to resist hearing a bit of the sing-song, was putting the final touch on his accounts. At length a glance at the clock told him that it was late. Pulling aside his blind, he glanced across a corner of the quadrangle and observed that the head master's red glim was "dowsed." For a moment he gazed at the black mass of buildings, and then, giving himself a little shake, put back the blind.

Everyone was in bed but himself. Time he was off to bed, too.

It is not a very pleasant thing being absolutely the last person up in a great building. One experiences a feeling of loneliness. At least, Mr. Street did as he opened the door of his room and found himself in a pitch-dark corridor. Not even the faint incandescent jet usually to be seen in the corridor had been left on. Cripps had turned everything off. No light would be wanted the following

night, so he had given every gas-bracket a final turn-off to-night. No more gas turning-off for five weeks now, Cripps had reflected as he went his rounds that night, but jovial talk and argifying, with other convivial worthies, down at the "Rose and Crown" in the village. Hooray for Christmas!

"Bother the fellow!" muttered Mr. Street.

He was a rather irritable young man, and, like other irritable people, nervy. Possibly he would not have questioned the safety of the large amount of money he was leaving in his room had not the corridor looked so black and forbidding. He had not noticed it was so late, and had hoped to find the usual dim lights in corridor and landing to illumine his bedward way. The incandescent jet would be burning in his bedroom; Cripps would not, even in *his* annoying thoroughness, have ventured to turn *that* out.

Mr. Street had only opened his door preparatory to turning out the light in his study. Now, as he looked for his matches, it occurred to him—for the first time—*was* all this money safe? There was a strong latch on his window, and it was a good seven feet from his window to the ground; but there were other windows that were more accessible.

He had often left money here before, locked up in his desk, and found it safe there in the morning. Besides, who of burglarious intent would suspect that this, of all the rooms in School House, was to-night the treasure-chamber? Rather would such seek the head master's study.

Still, thought Mr. Street, it was a good deal of money to leave downstairs—a big bag of silver and a smaller one of gold; a nice haul. Even if little danger was to be apprehended from without, he might be running a risk from within. He had found his cash short more than once this term, he fancied. He was certain as to one occasion—that sovereign. Absolutely certain that the money he had left in other clothes, and told Cheriton to fetch, had been reduced by a sovereign between the time Cheriton had fetched it from his room and when he came to square up his accounts at the end of the day.

The recollection made him frown. It had been a curious and perplexing bit of business. Not hurriedly, but in his own good time, and tactfully, he had changed the boy who helped him. Cheriton had proved a most trustworthy fellow until this happening proved him to be a—careless one. Mr. Street preferred to put it like that—a careless one.

Well, to-night, he fancied, he had better not leave all this money here. Somehow he felt nervous about it. Curiously nervous. . . . He would feel more comfortable if he had it in his bedroom with him. Much more comfortable. Better take it up with him, then.

But, first, he would count it all again. He and Stanhope—a most reliable boy, if hardly so quick at accounts as Cheriton—had already counted it twice. The amount was £116 8*s.* 6*d.* . . . He would make sure of that. No more mistakes, thank you.

He glanced at the window and then at the door, then unlocked his desk, took out the bags, and counted the money. . . . As before—£116 8*s.* 6*d.*

There was no doubt about that. . . . Good! Now to take it upstairs. Wait, though! It would do if he took the gold. . . . Yes, he would take the gold. One hundred and three pounds of it was in gold. To make certain, he would count in again, though he and Stanhope had already made it £103. He counted it again. Yes—£103. There was no doubt about it.

Mr. Street therefore locked up the silver in his desk and returned the gold to its bag. Nice, crisp feeling these bags that they gave you at the bank had! The very texture of the paper was respectable and substantial. In a word, bank-like.

Now, then—ready? A last glance round the room. . . . Have another look at the window. . . . Yes, well locked. Fire nearly out—no danger from that. Ready?

And he turned the gas out.

Clutching the bag of gold, Mr. Street then opened his door, and, going out into the corridor, struck a match. Expecting to find his way up by odd incandescent jets, he had not provided himself with a candle. Had he, however, known what that blundering fellow Cripps was about to do, he would have seen that he had one. Almost time Cripps retired. Unwieldy, short-tempered, and drank far too much beer. . . . *Ah!* The match had consumed away and burnt his fingers.

He struck another, and presently found himself in the music-room, whence by the masters' private staircase he could reach the first landing. Mr. Street's room was on the second landing, near a spiral staircase leading from dormitory eight up to the second landing.

At length he gained the first landing, the bag of gold clutched tightly in his hand. Rather awkward, striking matches with a bag of gold in one hand. Perhaps he had better not strike any more. A spark—one never knew. Safer not to. He could feel his way to his room now. Along here—a door; steady breathing, and mutterings from some boy in a dream. Now farther along. More breathing. Another room. Round the corner. Now—yes, here was the staircase. Now he was all right. Careful, now; don't want to drop the money.

He was on the second landing. He was home now—here, yes, here was his door. At last.

He opened it. But hardly had he opened it than he felt a hand upon his arm, then a glimmer of light shone. He uttered an exclamation and flung out his disengaged arm.

"Who's that?" he cried, sharply.

Then a heavy form fell against him. He struck out. The form grappled with him—or it seemed like it.

Hugging tightly the bag of gold, he tried to tear himself away, when—

Crash! And the gold had escaped in a shower from the bag and was running over the floor in all directions.

IV

Somebody in dormitory eight—Polson and Scriven's dormitory—sat up.

"*What's that?*"

Immediately half a dozen other fellows followed suit. From the landing above—down the short spiral staircase leading to the dormitory—came sounds of a scuffle and shouts.

In about a minute every fellow was awake. In another they were out of bed and slipping on clothes, for the night was cold. Then they crept towards the spiral staircase to investigate.

A familiar voice sounded:

"Light the gas—quick! Tell Cripps to come and turn it on."

They scampered up. From Mr. Street's bedroom shone a broad stream of light—he had darted in and turned up the gas—and by this the boys beheld the strange sight of Mr. Street scrabbling on the floor among a litter of gold coins.

Almost as strange a sight as the first—who, of all the fellows in the school acting as assistant-treasurer to Mr. Street, and helping him gather up the sovereigns, did they behold, but—Polson!

Other doors opened, and amid the crowd of faces one could perceive the pale, collected countenance of Cheriton.

Mr. Street kept on looking up from his work.

"Stand back, all of you! Do you hear? Stand back!"

"What's the matter?" Boulter's sleepy voice could be heard inquiring.

"Street's dropped the travelling money."

"My word! Hands up, Pyke!"

"Can't get 'em up," replied Pyke. "Got somebody else's coat on."

"So have I," put in Boulter. "*And* trousers! Thought there was a fire, and put on the first things I could find."

"Etons, too!" growled Pyke. "Thought I'd done with 'em."

But the others were too much interested in the money-gathering to take notice of these two for the moment.

Mr. Street, with cries of "Stand back, there!" to the huddled mass of boys on either side of him, went on feverishly retrieving the sovereigns by the light thrown from his room. He had swept the eider-down from his bed, and as he scooped up the gold he threw it on the white counterpane.

Polson was helping him, but he desired more help, yet at the same time he didn't want to be confused by a rush of helpers. Desisting from his frantic labours for a moment, he glanced towards the nearest group, and in doing so espied a familiar face. Not that the other faces were unfamiliar, but this was a very familiar face, and he must have forgotten in the urgency of the moment that it belonged to a fellow whom he did not implicitly trust.

"Here, you, Cheriton!" he cried. "Go and put that money on the bed into this bag, and count it as you do so."

As he spoke he held up the bank bag he had dropped. The pale-faced Cheriton started forward eagerly, took the bag from Mr. Street, and immediately began to replace the sovereigns in the bag, taking tally of them as he did so.

Now a gruff voice sounded in the passage.

"Out of the way 'ere, will you? Let me come at that gas."

And Cripps, dressed only in shirt and trousers, and holding in one hand a lighted taper and in the other the iron key without

The light revealed the master scrambling on the floor, amid a litter of gold coins, and helping him to gather them was Polson!

which the gas could not be turned on or off, pressed his way through the crowd and lighted the gas

"Ah, thank you, Cripps!" breathed Mr. Street. "Now we can see what we're doing."

That part of the corridor being now well illuminated, the fellows began to peer round in the neighbourhood of their bare feet for errant sovereigns.

"Look about in the bedroom, Polson," said Mr. Street. "The money fell here—just in the doorway—some inside and some outside. Help him, Scriven."

Scriven, who had fetched Cripps, had felt half inclined, his errand completed, to go to "Eight" and get into bed, thus avoiding a further encounter with the angry master whom he and Polson, in the course of carrying out their great "rag," had barged into in the darkness and caused to drop his bag of money. Both he and Polson, indeed, would have flown, but that Mr. Street had clutched hold of them and demanded their names. In reply to a further wrathful inquiry from Mr. Street as to what they were doing out of their rooms, they had replied that they had been "getting some clothes," not, however, explaining that the clothes they bore in their arms were Boulter and Pyke's.

"Go and call Cripps," was Mr. Street's order to Scriven. "You, Polson, stop and help me pick up this money."

The brains of the partnership, Scriven even then did not lose his head; but, darting down the spiral staircase, flung the clothes of Boulter and Pyke anyhow on the Twins' beds, and then slipped away like an eel through the darkness to call the manservant. Returning, he, as recorded, would fain have taken to his couch, but that all the laws of honour bade him stand by his chum, and so he now made himself as inconspicuous as possible by dropping to his hands and knees and searching for stray coins in the darkest corners of the room.

All available hands having joined in the hunt, sharp upon one another came exclamations of, "Here you are, sir!" "Here's another, sir!" The landing was of bare boards, and it was not possible for any coin to escape observation very long. But it fell to Talmage, who, with other prefects, had been roused by the commotion, to put in force a sort of sweeping operation which promised to leave not a single coin undiscovered. Herding the barefooted searchers back to either end of the corridor, he detailed two parties of three members apiece to go down on their hands and knees and crawl towards each other. He chose small boys, as the more likely to obey his orders promptly. These two parties, covering every inch of the floor as far as a sovereign could possibly roll, rounded up the last straggling coins and handed them to Mr. Street.

"Good idea, Talmage," said Mr. Street. "Thank you, very much! Now all the rest must be somewhere in my room——"

He had got so far when there arose a yell of laughter.

"Silence! Silence!" he cried. "Go to your rooms!"

No one took any notice of him, and the laughter grew riotous.

"What *is* the matter?" demanded Mr. Street. "You'll wake the whole house up!"

"It's the Calthorpes, sir," explained Talmage, himself chuckling. "They're togged up a bit queerly."

Mr. Street paused in the act of entering his room to glance at the Twins, who, being two of the juniors singled out for the crawling, had just risen to their feet. Small below the average, each was enveloped in a tail-coat that looked yards too big for him. In fact, they had had to turn the sleeves up in order to enjoy the free use of their hands. In the panic of their sudden awakening they had put on the first clothes they grabbed, and though they felt that something was wrong—very wrong—with their garb, they had nevertheless hurried off to the scene of the commotion.

"See them all off to bed, Talmage," said Mr. Street, shortly. And going into his room he closed the door.

Hardly had he done so when Pyke, who had thrust his hand into the pocket of the Eton coat he was wearing, drew forth a letter.

"Bouly," he said, "look at that!"

The letter bore the superscription: "Master Rollo Calthorpe."

"My word!" said Boulter; and they sprang forward like greyhounds freed from the leash.

The Twins, gazing uncomfortably at one another, painfully conscious the while that they had never looked so ridiculous in their lives, suddenly became aware of the tall forms bearing down on them to the music of another howl of laughter. Some instinct

told them that danger was at hand, so, not waiting to go into the whys and wherefores of the matter, they turned and bolted like hares, the long tails of their coats trailing after them, for the spiral staircase. Reaching the top step a yard ahead of the big fellows, they disappeared down the staircase with all the celerity of the creatures of the chase they just now resembled, and dived into the friendly blackness of dormitory eight.

Pyke stopped at the top of the staircase.

"I think, Bouly, the morning will do for this?"

"Yes, we'll go into it then," said Boulter, with much meaning.

And holding their small coats tightly about their large forms, they got them shiveringly back to their own beds.

Polson and Scriven, all unconscious that their "rag" had worked out so triumphantly, were still groping about Mr. Street's bedroom when the young master came in.

"Three more, Cheriton," he said. "Now, finish your counting carefully, and tell me what the amount is."

Cheriton at length dropped the last coin into the bag.

"Well?"

"A hundred and three pounds, sir."

"A hundred and three! Why, every coin has been found. This is capital! . . . But to make certain I will count it myself."

He shook out the sovereigns on to the bed, and very carefully counted them back into the bag.

"Quite right; the exact amount. One hundred and three pounds."

But at that moment an exclamation came from Scriven.

"What is it, Scriven?"

"One more, sir!"

"One more! But I have the exact amount here." Mr. Street walked across the room to Scriven. "Where did you find it? What is it?"

"A sovereign, sir. It was lying in the corner here, sir, between your tennis shoes."

"How very extraordinary!" muttered Mr. Street. "Why, that makes *a hundred and four pounds*, and so we're one pound to the good. How very extraordinary!"

Mr. Street looked hard at the corner where lay his tennis shoes and other footgear.

Careless housemaiding was evidenced in the fact that there was dust on and about the shoes. Mr. Street had played his last game of tennis at the end of September, and the shoes hadn't been moved since he had taken them off and put them down here where he changed out of his flannels.

"How very extraordinary!" he muttered again. "To drop a hundred and three pounds and find a hundred and four!"

"Perhaps you dropped this some other time, sir," suggested Polson.

And in a flash Mr. Street saw that this was the explanation. It must be the sovereign that he had found himself short of when Cheriton was acting as his assistant . . .

"I make no claim to it," he said, promptly. "You three boys can divide it between you."

It was a welcome Christmas-box, and they said, "Thank you, sir!" very heartily.

"And thank you, all three, for helping me," returned Mr. Street, "though to be sure," he turned upon Polson and Scriven, "if it hadn't been for you two—but there! Get along! If it weren't the last night you'd get something for being out of your room, *I* can tell you."

Polson and Scriven got out quickly. Cheriton was just passing Mr. Street when the young master held out his hand.

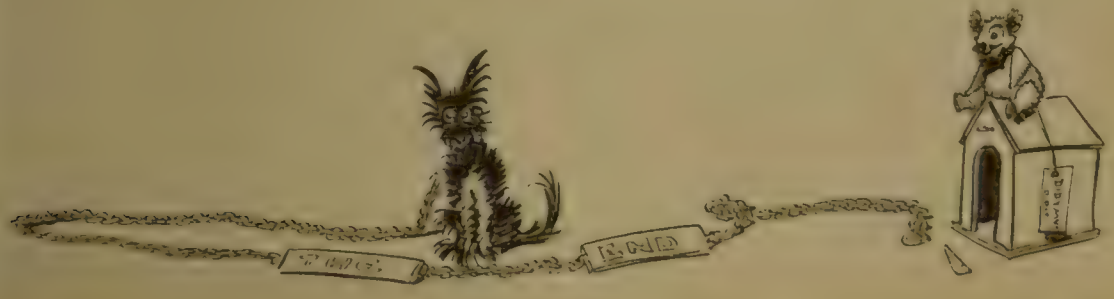
"Good night, Cheriton."

"Good night, sir," said Cheriton, humbly.

"Next term, if you're not too busy, you'll lend me a hand again, I hope."

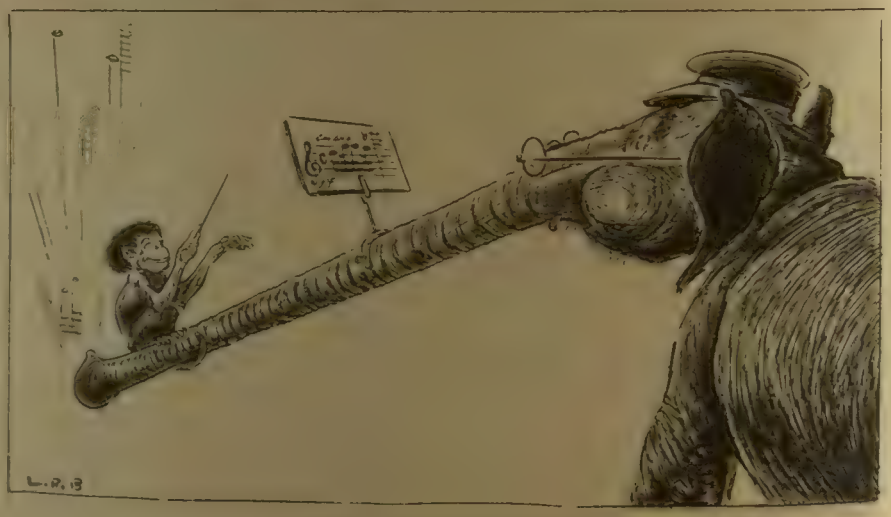
"I'll be awfully glad to, sir," said Cheriton.

And that was the very last payment made on Pay Day.



"Waits" at the Zoo

Written and Illustrated by L. R. BRIGHTWELL



A fanfare by the Zoo trombonist.

IT is possible that the reader may, on first consideration, be inclined to deny, or at least dispute, the Zoo's participation in that time-honoured institution—the "Waits." He may even entertain grave misgivings as to there being the slightest analogy between the not always tuneful voices of the animals and the invariably ravishing sounds annually poured forth by tenor, bass, and tin whistle beneath his bedroom window. It is the purpose of this brief article to show that not only is the Zoo in possession of a quite unrivalled choice of Christmas minstrels—but that the members of the choir are "Waits" in the truest, strictest, and most literal acceptance of the term.

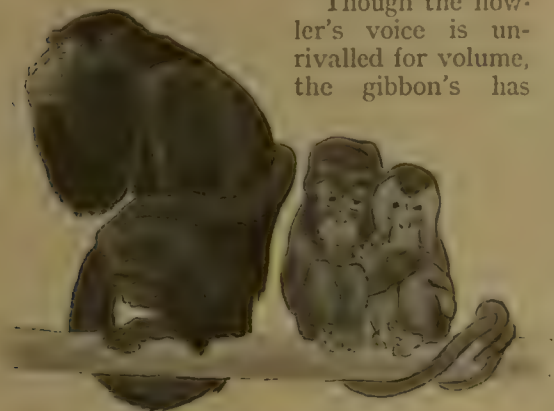
"Waits" is a word derived from the Anglo-Saxon, and means to "wake" or "watch"; and the earliest "waits" of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries were simply watchmen, who sounded horns or played tunes upon a flute or flageolet to mark the hours of the night. This form of torture was known as "Piping the Watch." The Black Book of the Royal Household of King Edward IV., 1478, provided for "a Wayte that nyghtly from Mychaelmas to Shrove Thorsday pipe the Watch within the courte foure tymes; in the sommere nyghts, three tymes; and maken bon gayte at every chambre doore and offyce, as well as for feare of pyckeres and pilfers."

Where is the watchman nowadays who more explicitly fulfils this ancient decree than do the inmates of the Zoo? Anyone who has spent as has the writer long summer nights alone in the gardens, and endeavoured to snatch forty winks upon a seat until the moon shall rise, will testify to the "wakefulness" and "watchfulness" of the Regent's Park waits. Every hour, every half and quarter, is cried by its peculiar warden. Eight o'clock is the signal for the flute-like twittering of the great fruit bats in the Rodents' House. From nine o'clock to ten a vast variety of vocalists—bears, badgers, lemurs, and jackals—begin to go on duty. Then for a short time there is comparative quiet, soon to be broken as the owl, the bittern, and the whip-poor-Will come forward with their eerie melodies; and presently, as the moon begins to rise, the air, till now alive with ghostly murmurings, is hushed to a shuddering silence by the long-drawn howl of the wolf; unutterably melancholy heard by night. But even the wolf's voice is silenced by the crash of thunder that comes from the lions' domain; and then all is silent once again, a silence only broken by the whisperings and scuffling of a multitude of mice that patter over seats and rockeries, and even the king of beasts himself. As the night begins to fade before the first pale streaks of dawn, a wild chorus of howls and moans, more unearthly than any other sound with which the Zoo can play upon the timid visitor's nerves—a chorus as of lost spirits goes up from the ape house, where the chimpanzees and gibbons join together in their morning song. Yes, the Zoo indeed has its "waits" to call the hours of the night. As for the "pyckeres" and "pilfers," it would be a bold burglar who would venture a midnight raid upon the Zoo; only the ever present rats have learned to brave the

terrors of the dark to pillage the Society's larder.

There is considerable diversity of opinion as to which vocalist possesses the greatest "staying power." Most, including the writer, award the laurels to the howler monkey. Not a wanderer in South America but has testified to the amazing powers of this four-handed songster. It is some time since the Zoo possessed a howler monkey, for they do not live long in confinement. A short while ago we saw three magnificent specimens at Jamrack's—the famous animal dealer, near the Tower of London. At the first visit the howlers were merely making a soft mournful sound—rather suggestive of a powerful mouth-organ—but chancing to pass that way one night we were amazed at the devastating cry that broke from the warehouse wherein they were lodged. Travellers have asserted that in the forest the deep organ-like note can be heard for more than three miles. Usually one large howler posts himself upon the topmost bough of a high tree and leads a choir of about a dozen ladies and gentlemen.

The apparatus wherewith the howler howls is peculiar. The bony sack which forms the larynx, and determines the quality of the voices of all beasts and birds, is enormously developed, giving the howler an appearance of suffering from goitre. Not unnaturally the South American Indians believe that any liquid drunk from one of these "throat shells" is an infallible cure for all kinds of bronchial trouble.



Solemn calm among the young monkeys, until—

Though the howler's voice is unrivalled for volume, the gibbon's has certainly a wider range. Jemmy, the young houlock gibbon, could command several octaves and daily filled the Ape House to overflowing. The gibbon's vocal effects are considerably augmented by means of a special air sack, as are also those of the orang-utan and gorilla. The gorilla in particular heightens the effect by smiting upon his breast after the most approved manner of some Grand Opera singers. Indeed, few four-footed or furry creatures are without a voice of some kind, though with the porcupine and giraffe science has decided that "mum's the word!" One of the strangest cases of animal songsters is provided by the mouse. The mouse can only sing when he is afflicted with a peculiar throat complaint which obliges him to maintain a continual whistling sound, extremely melodious and sweet but apt to become monotonous after a week or two.

—the howler howls!

In the civic records of the early part of the sixteenth century, we are told that the London and Corporation waits wore a special livery of blue gowns with red sleeves and caps, and silver chains and collars around their necks. This fine old custom seems unfortunately to have become altogether extinct, which is the more to be regretted since a distinctive uniform nowadays would make it very much easier to "spot," and, if necessary, reproach the breaker of our night's repose. But no; somehow or other the artistic temperament seems almost universally to eschew brilliant decorations. Most singers and pianists appear in the penitential

garments modern tradition dictates, and so it is in the animal world. Fine feathers and skins may make fine birds and beasts, but they certainly do not make tuneful ones. The houlock, the nightingale, the lark, the thrush, all lack bright plumage. Music and modesty would seem—in most cases—to go together, if we except the bullfinch with his corporation and bucolic waistcoat.

Few houses in the Zoo present a larger company of vocalists than the Reptile House. Only the small Bird House could hope to outrival the "Chorus" and singers of part-songs that the "Frog half" of the Reptile House now boasts. After a shower of rain the tree frogs' chorus is positively deafening; whilst the bull frogs' solo reminds one of the celebrated Russian singer who could break a window with his voice, so great was its volume. Many of the lizards can chirp and whistle, whilst the crocodiles and alligators can on occasion make as much noise as a lion or the trombone-playing elephant.

But not all the Zoo music is vocal. Acres of prose and miles of poetry have been expended on the feathered songsters of the grove, but very little has been said—except by a few savants—upon the *instrumental* music of birds.

The stork can make a surprisingly loud noise by clattering his beak, but most bird musicians use their wings. Peacocks and birds of paradise rattle their quills. Everybody has heard of the wonderful noises produced by the vibrations of the humming birds' wings; and most of us know the partridge's capabilities in this direction. Many, too, no doubt, have been puzzled by the snipe's extraordinary booming, rumbling, and neighing sounds. These are all produced by the rush of air through the curiously shaped tail feathers, as the snipe descends at a dizzy speed from a height of a thousand feet or so. Many kinds of grouse also produce a loud drumming sound by drawing the points of their outstretched wing feathers along the ground. A somewhat similar drumming noise is made by several fish, though in their case the sound is chiefly produced by the teeth or, as in a few cases, the drumming of the tail against a boat keel.

Never was there such an orchestra as the insect world can boast! Buzzing, booming bees and hornets, fiddling crickets, grasshoppers, and locusts, castaneting beetles, squeaking moths and caterpillars—all sounds produced by legs or wings or neck joints, for insects have no lungs in our acceptance of the word. They are wonderful musical imitators, too. Such sounds as wood sawing, iron drilling, wheat threshing, razor stropping, potato pealing—all the noises of a futurist orchestra—are possible to the insect musician. How many paunchy beetles, too, bear a quaint resemblance to a dropsical bass viol, whilst insect land is full of imitation flutes and flageolets.

Futurist music is not new to the insect orchestra.

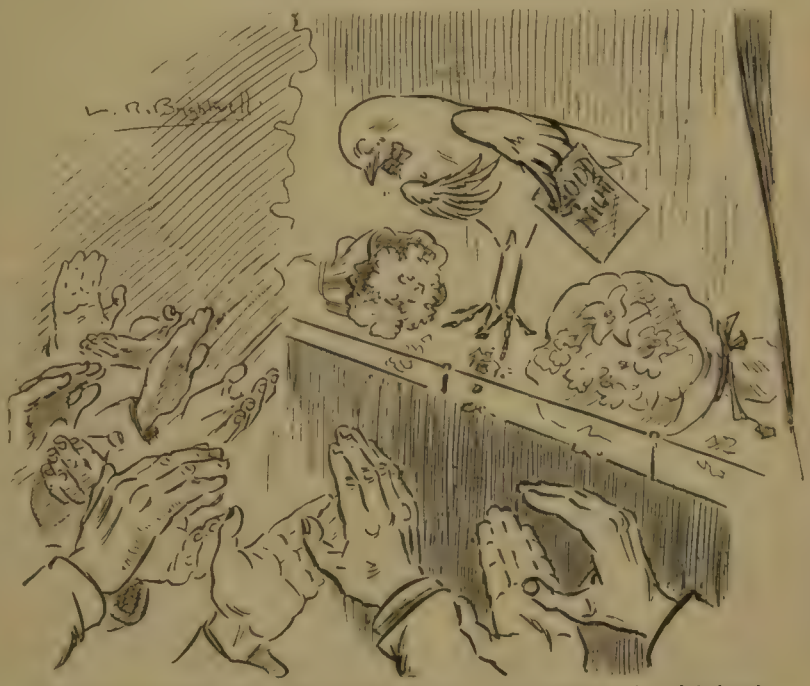
We shall not easily forget our surprise when we first heard the violin-playing lobster. We were assisting in the recovery of some lobster-pots off the Jersey coast, when suddenly, as the pots were drawn within some four fathoms of the surface, we heard the deep guttural notes as of several bass violins. And presently the musicians themselves

appeared. The pot was full of crawfish, that produced, we afterwards learnt, the extraordinary grunting sounds by drawing their feelers across two serrated shelly plates. A little later in the season we met the wonderful little "snap fish," a lobster-like creature some two inches long, that by snapping his claws produced a sound certainly as loud as that to be obtained by snapping one's thumb and forefinger.

The star turn in its day was the famous "Whistling Oyster." Incredible as it may seem, now, this wondrous bivalve set all the fashionable world aglow with interest and excitement in the year 1840. The proprietor of a little oyster bar in Vinegar Yard, hard by Drury Lane, discovered that one of a barrel of oysters fattening in brine and oatmeal, made a strange whistling sound by forcing water through a small hole made by a whelk or a star fish in its shell—though this was not disclosed at the time. As a result of this lucky find, the wit and fashion of the day crowded to the "Whistling Oyster"—as the shop was ever afterwards called—to view the molluscus musician. The editor of *Punch*, George Augustus Sala, Dickens, and Thackeray, amongst other celebrities, visited the bar, and were delighted—save one American gentleman. This worthy declared that in Massachusetts he knew an oyster that whistled Yankee Doodle right through, and followed its master about like a dog!

Some animals have become finally and irrevocably associated with their one and only song—and named accordingly. Thus the ca-ca, the howi, the aye-aye, and the whip-poor-Will have all been named in celebration of their not too tuneful repertoires.

Elaborate were the injunctions as to the victualling of the "Wait" in olden times. King Edward IV.'s veteran bard was to "sup nightly upon half a loaf and half a gallon of ale"—a very generous spread, so far as the liquid portion was concerned, at any rate. Even so late as Washington Irving's days the jovial householder pressed pies and ale or, better still, mulled wine or boiling hot "purl" on the musicians as a reward for their efforts. Nowadays, alas! the Wait is often lucky if he gets nothing worse than a jugful of cold water pressed upon him. And herein at least do the Zoo waits fare a vast deal better. For whatever their performance they never fail to get their Christmas dinner—and a very good dinner too!



In the bird world music and modesty usually go together, the nightingale being the leading example.

FLAMEHAIR THE SKALD

A Story of the Days when the Norsemen Ruled the Seas

By H. BEDFORD JONES ◇ Illustrated by T. Heath Robinson

ALFGAR, called Flamehair from his golden locks, is a young Saxon captured from England by a marauding band of Vikings, who themselves are subsequently beaten at sea by Harald Hardrede, of Norway, whose service Alfgar enters. He proves his worth by a remarkable feat of oar-walking, and also wins the favour of the Norsemen by his skill as a skald, or singer.

He learns that Harald, exiled from his own land, of which he is the rightful sovereign, has become the acolyth or chief of the Varangars, the royal bodyguard at Byzantium, most of whom are Norsemen, like Harald himself. The Empress wishes to marry Harald, and, as he refuses, lays a trap for him, and he and Alfgar are captured on the royal ship, whose commander has orders to take Harald to the summer palace.

Alfgar escapes and swims to land, then announces to the Varangars—among whom he finds his uncle Eadgar—that their chief is a prisoner.

The next night Harald is rescued, and, after a fierce fight in Byzantium, he and his men embark on the *Crossbeak* and the *Dragon*. The latter ship is lost in crossing the huge cable stretched across the straits at night, but the *Crossbeak*, with the Emperor whom they have captured on board, crosses safely and sails for the open sea.

Tired with his exertions, Alfgar goes to sleep; and when he awakes, he finds himself on land.

CHAPTER IX

IN THE OPEN

"WELL, Flamehair, how do you feel after the night's work?" asked his uncle.

"I feel just as though I had dreamed it all," smiled Alfgar. "But I suppose it is really true. What are we doing here?"

"Harald is sending back the Emperor and the other prisoners," rejoined his uncle.

"Unharmed?"

"Yes, and with the message that next time the Empress tries to hold Harald Hardrede a prisoner she had best look to her throne," chuckled the Saxon, grimly. "We are waiting for Harald and the men to return. They took the captives inland a bit. Round the point, ahead, lies the open sea that the Greeks call the Euxine, though the Russians call it the Black Sea. Our way lies across that, lad, and then our journey will really be begun."

"And is it far, uncle?" asked Alfgar. He knew nothing of this land of the east, and, indeed, there were few men in his day who did, save those who dwelt in the east itself.

Eadgar nodded gravely. He himself knew no more of what lay ahead than he had picked up from Harald and the rest, most of whom had come to Byzantium from Russia by the same route. To the mouth of the Dneper was some five hundred miles, and they would ascend the river about the same distance to Kiev, the southern Russian capital. The real capital of Jarisleif was Novgorod, six hundred miles farther north, where they would end their journey. A thousand miles by boat and six hundred by land was no small thing to attempt in those days, especially when enemies might be lying in wait on every hand. Hitherto, Alfgar had been carried off his feet by the mad rush of events. In the heat of enthusiasm, with eager comrades on every side, with excitement burning in his veins, he had thought and cared little for what might come. But now, talking soberly and quietly with his uncle Eadgar, he sought Atli's words of the night before for assurance.

"Atli?" repeated Eadgar. "Why, lad, the old steersman is like all the rest, sturdy Viking that he is. They are but children after all, in their passions and sympathies. If Harald bid

them leap overboard, they would do it gladly. If he did one of them an injustice they would turn against him just as gladly."

"But surely," cried Alfgar, in dismay, "they would never do that?"

"No," agreed Eadgar, "I hardly think so, for they have followed him too long, and they love him too much. Still, they have the tremendous assurance of physical strength. They know, or rather believe, that they can conquer ten times their number. To sweep up to Norway seems a little thing to them, although it may well be that Harald will never win his throne. His nephew Magnus is living, you know."

"I didn't know," answered Alfgar. "Is Magnus king?"

"As to that we know nothing," returned Eadgar. "Our last news was that Edward ruled England, but that the Danes still held Norway firmly. Before he died, King Olaf, Harald's older brother, promised that Magnus and Harald should share Norway between them when it was recovered from the Dane, but it was never recovered. However, we can leave all that until we reach Kiev and know what the situation is."

Their conversation was interrupted by a shout from the men on shore, and Harald appeared at the head of a party, coming down through the woods. He ordered the men aboard at once, explained to Eadgar that the Emperor had been given in charge of a small band of Greek soldiers, and, after directing Haldor and Ulf to steer north across the Black Sea, entered the cabin to gain some much-needed sleep. Atli appeared from below, where he had also been recuperating, and in half an hour the *Crossbeak* was sailing north under a stiff breeze and the headlands of the Bosphorus were vanishing in the distance.

* * * * *

While Alfgar had slept, Harald had decided that he would send the captive Emperor back with a message calculated to wound the pride of the Empress. Some of the men had inflated hopes of an immense ransom, but Harald knew that the Emperor was but a figurehead and of little value as a hostage. However, the pride of the Vikings was fully equal to their cupidity, and they were well satisfied to let the Emperor go safe with his message.

The young Saxon found this voyage very different from the trip down from England. Harald's object was not plunder and rapine, as had been Raud's. Most of the men were loaded down with the spoils of their campaigns, and the entire spirit of the crew was wholesome and vigorous in the extreme. Every man was a seasoned warrior, and both Alfgar and his uncle thought they had never seen a finer body of men.

"In any case," said Eadgar that afternoon, as he and Alfgar stood on the stern, "we will not be so badly off. I have won enough to return to England if I so desire, and now that we alone remain of the old house I may do so after this venture is finished. But the country will be strange to me, my old friends and comrades will be gone, and it may well be that should Harald gain Norway I will remain with him."

"It matters little to me," added Alfgar. "I remember scarcely anything of my father and mother, and I know that our lands are in the hands of Danes. I have never met anyone whom I would sooner follow than Harald, and yet—well, we will see how things turn out, uncle. It may be that a strong Saxon will rule in England, and if so we may regain our own. Edward is half French, and Earl Godwin is our Saxon hope."

"Fair weather, skald!" cried Harald, emerging at this moment from the cabin. "Will you challenge me to the oar-walking again?"

"Not I," laughed Alfgar, glancing at Atli with a smile. "I'm stiff enough now after wearing that armour all last night!"

"You'll get used to that," chuckled Harald, glancing down at his own byrnie which he had not removed even to sleep. "By the way, Thiodolf was somewhat wounded during the fray, and cannot use a harp. Come, Flamehair, speed us onward with a rousing song!"

His clear voice carried the words to the men, who at once sent up a cheer and came crowding aft. Alfgar, after some search, located his harp among the baggage and set it into shape for use. Many were the suggestions put forward as to the song, but old Atli settled it finally.

"Give us the wise words of Brynhild, lad," he exclaimed. "That bit of the Sigurd saga I taught you first—the wisdom of the warrior!"

"Aye, give us that!" cried a number of voices, and with a smile Alfgar obeyed, singing to his harp-music the unrhymed, rugged old words that Farseer had taught him, concluding with the following verse:—

Hear now my last rede, warrior!
Deal naught with men a-drinking,
For ale words are but ill words;
Naught but grief they bring thee,
Naught but bane and sorrow;
Wine steals wit from all men!

"Skoal! Skoal to Flamehair the Skald!" rang out the shout as Alfgar laid down his harp. Weapons clashed their approval and, although the young skald shook his head, Harald turned to him with a smile.

"Come, lad! Are there no songs in thy England? Surely it cannot be so sorry a country!"

"Aye," responded Alfgar, instantly, "songs there are and enough, but I know them not, for them the monks did not teach me."

"Nonsense," interrupted old Atli, impatiently. "Prove your skaldship, lad! It were a sorry skald who had to keep his verses in mind! Give him a subject, comrades!"

"Silence!" shouted Harald, as a roar went up, each man crying to Alfgar for some favourite subject. "Flamehair, make me a song on the daughter of Jarisleif!"

A howl of approval rose, but Alfgar looked blank indeed.

"I've never even seen her, Harald!" he protested. "Not the best of skalds could be expected——"

His words were drowned in shouts and the clashing of steel, and Harald laughed again.

"No matter—prove your skaldship! A test!"

"So be it, then," and Alfgar thought a moment. The men quieted down instantly, as they observed his acceptance of the challenge, and a moment later Alfgar swept a wild, shrill chord on his harp, and broke into a chant that pleased his chief greatly.

"Good!" came Harald's voice through the din of applause, and Alfgar felt his hand swiftly seized. Harald, in his delight, had taken off a heavy arm-ring of gold and slipped it over the wrist of the Saxon, while the men greeted the act with loud shouts. Harald seized the harp and broke into a chant of his own, proving himself to be no slight skald as well as warrior; indeed, a few of Harald's verses have been preserved even to this day.

The *Crossbeak* was running out of sight of land, but towards evening the wind shifted from south to west, and began to blow up strongly. By morning the sky was grey and dark, with frequent shifts of wind, and dim on the east appeared the coast of southern Russia. It was evident that they were in for a bad gale, and after a conference with Atli and Haldor, Harald decided to run in to the land for shelter. Although the *Crossbeak* was stout and seaworthy enough, it was known that the Black Sea was highly treacherous, and Harald refused to take any risks at this juncture.

So the prow was turned to the east, and towards noon they were running past a heavily wooded country, where mountains loomed far away and no sign of human life appeared. Harald explained to Alfgar that the sway of Jarisleif did not extend over this more southern land, which was inhabited by wandering nomad tribes, the descendants of Huns and Goths who had swept across the empire centuries before. They had no rule and knew no law, and were a constant menace to the Byzantine towns along the coast.

Shortly before the storm broke, the dragon rounded a long headland, and before her lay a long narrow bay, which the men greeted with a shout of joy. The square-sail was quickly run down and the oars put out, and in a few minutes the *Crossbeak* was rowed into the mouth of a small river at the head of the bay, just as the storm burst. Alfgar felt glad indeed that they had escaped its fury, for a worse storm he had seldom experienced, although it promised to be of short duration.

The weapons and armour were stowed away out of reach of the rain, and the ship was moored in shallow water close to the shore. For half an hour the rain and hail drove over them furiously, then ceased altogether, although the wind continued stronger than ever. Part of the men now leaped overboard and waded ashore, pulling the ship closer in, and Harald ordered a temporary camp to be made on the river bank.

"We'll have to stow everything away and make her shipshape," he said, "and it might as well be done now. We have a long voyage ahead of us, and if we ran foul of an enemy while we were encumbered with all this plunder it would go hard with us."

Alfgar easily saw the force of this. Not only the hold and cabins, but even the deck was littered with the loot of Byzantium. The Varangars had not neglected their opportunity on that last wild night, and the Saxon was amazed at the variety and richness of the spoil. Most of the men wore heavy gold arm-rings, necklaces, and other articles; there were cups and goblets of every description from the Emperor's palace, all of the precious metal; while silks, hangings, and wondrous textiles

lay everywhere. To the Northmen these latter articles were fully as valuable as gold, or would be when they arrived home.

When the violence of the wind was somewhat abated, a temporary camp was made on shore and the water casks were filled with fresh water from the river. The sacks and bundles of loot were taken ashore by Harald's orders, and all the contents were sorted out and a systematic loading begun, a general division being promised at the end of the voyage.

Now for the first time Alfgar noticed a number of women, and suddenly remembered the hostages, wives and relatives of the Varangars, who had been rescued from their prison. The greater number of these had belonged to the Varangars who had remained behind, not more than a dozen having gone on board the two ships. Alfgar had seen nothing of them during the day, for all had been resting below, but now they had come ashore and he noticed Hrolf Dagson, the English Dane, speaking with one of them. At the same instant Hrolf observed the young Saxon.

"Ho, Flamehair!" called the Viking, "Here is one who would speak to you!"

As Alfgar walked up he remembered Sigrid, and found that this was indeed Hrolf's daughter. She was a slender, dark-haired girl whose firm handgrip and steady eyes bespoke her of true Viking stock.

"I owe you thanks, Alfgar of England," she said as they shook hands, "for I understand that it is to you we owe our freedom."

"Hardly," responded Alfgar, with a smile, "seeing that with any leader save Harald we would hardly be here now! Nay, thank me not," he added, hurriedly, to stay her protests. "It was more luck than aught else."

"In any case I thank you," she answered. "Think you we will stay on shore to-night?"

"I know nothing of Harald's plans," rejoined Alfgar, scanning the sky, "but I rather think we will."

Harald was only a short distance from them, issuing orders, and at this instant he called Eadgar to him.

"Take a few of the men, Eadgar, and go a bit up the stream. If you come across any village, try to buy an ox or a few sheep; if not, there are deer and boars in the forest. If you do meet a village, take nothing without paying for it, but bring back some fresh meat if you can before dark. Keep the men close together, mind."

"Let me go too, Harald," exclaimed Alfgar, who had overheard. Harald nodded carelessly, and Alfgar excused himself to Hrolf and Sigrid to follow his uncle.

"Where is Svein Arnison?" asked Eadgar, as he picked out his men.

"I know not," replied Hrolf, who had asked to be of the party. "He took his bow and vanished among the trees a short space back."

"Bad for him if Harald hears of it," commented another, grimly, and Alfgar wondered if Svein had gone hunting independently. However, the dozen were soon chosen. Eadgar ordered them to carry bows instead of spears, and without more ado they left the camp.

Glad to be on shore once more, the men moved along gaily, shouting and jesting like children. Rambling through the trees, but not far apart, they played rough jokes on each other as they went, and more than one went rolling to the ground as he was cleverly tripped or thrown. Alfgar broke one of the thongs that served him for leggings in one of these encounters, and so it happened that he lingered a moment behind the others to replace it.

As he finished the task and rose to his feet, he heard a swift "hiss" and something tore through his long hair, close to his neck. With a shock Alfgar realised that it was an arrow, and leaped to the shelter of a tree. As he did so a second shaft struck his side, and fell broken from his steel byrnie. He was amazed to see that it was a Norse arrow!

Instantly he remembered Svein, and choked back the shout already on his lips. Stringing his bow, he peered out carefully, just in time to see a dark form flitting back through the trees. Reckless of the danger, Alfgar gained his feet and dashed straight for it, and a moment later recognised the figure of Svein. As he ran he placed a shaft on the string and let fly, but the arrow flew wide.

Alfgar was a good runner, but Svein was a better, and gained on him fast. Furious at the base attempt made on his life, the young Saxon strained every nerve, but he could not decrease the distance between them. Instead, it increased rapidly, until the form of the man ahead was lost to sight. Baffled, angry, and determined to settle the senseless quarrel without delay, Alfgar ran forward at a lope to rejoin his party.

He had not lost his way, for the woods were too open for that, and a moment later he heard a burst of shouts ahead. He recognised his uncle's voice, and instantly knew that something was wrong. Breaking into a run, he dashed ahead just as the note of a war

horn rose through the forest; and then came another shout and the clash of steel.

Suddenly, as if from the very ground, a dozen dark skin-clad forms sprang up around him, and a weight bore him back. Fighting wildly against the man who had leaped upon him, Alfgar wriggled free and drew his sword, his back against a tree. There was no hesitation on the part of his opponents, and Alfgar could only strike blindly. So swiftly had all happened that almost before he realised that he was fighting for his life there came the gleam of an axe above him, something crashed down on his helm, and the last he remembered was staggering forward with hands outstretched, or he fell headlong.

CHAPTER X

A CAPTIVE

WHEN Alfgar came to himself he found that his hands and feet were tightly bound and his head throbbed with pain. Although his steel cap had protected his head somewhat from the force of the blow, nevertheless he must have been unconscious for some time, as the day was nearly spent.

He closed his eyes again and listened to the talk of the men who carried him. They spoke rapidly but in a strange tongue, and were no doubt Tartars from the steppes beyond the Dniester. But after a little they began to chatter excitedly, and Alfgar opened his eyes

A dozen skin-clad forms suddenly sprang up around him, and Alfgar drew his sword to fight for his life.

to find that they were entering a village that blazed with fires.

Depositing him unceremoniously on the ground the men untied his bonds, while a crowd gathered around with many exclamations of wonder at the sight of him. They examined his byrnie and clothing closely, chattering away in their strange tongue, but the effort to communicate with him was soon given up. One, an old woman clad in skins, brought him a vessel of goat's milk, which Alfgar drank greedily.

His captors were small men but very muscular. Their clothing consisted of a mingling of skins and woollen garments, while the neighing of horses told Alfgar that the village was probably settled by a nomadic tribe. However, the men treated him kindly enough, giving him food while they themselves ate, and helping him to chafe the blood back into his numbed wrists and ankles.

Then he was helped to his feet and led forward to a large fire around which was gathered a group of men. From their superior dress Alfgar inferred that these were the leaders of the tribe. They tried in vain to question him, not even his Latin being understood, and at length began to confer among themselves.

At one of the other fires Alfgar saw a crowd of the people gathered about a man who presently began to sing a rude song in a monotonous voice, accompanying himself on a rough form of harp, not unlike his own Saxon instrument. Instantly the thought flashed into Alfgar's brain that here might be a way to ingratiate himself with his captors, or at least to make his life valuable to them. They seemed highly pleased with their skald, for even the chiefs paused to listen, and when he finished his song there was subdued but hearty applause.

As the man laid down the harp Alfgar sprang up and walked over to the other fire where he was. No attempt was made to restrain his movements, although the Tartars watched him with surprise, and a little exclamation broke from them when he picked up the rude harp and tried it. It had fewer strings than his own instrument, but otherwise did not differ greatly, and after a moment Alfgar began the song of Beowulf in his own Saxon tongue.

There was dead silence as he sang. Of course the words were unintelligible to his hearers, but his clear, sweet voice rang high to the music of the strings, and he knew at once that he had captured his captors. His head was still aching badly, but Alfgar forgot this in the song as he told of the great deeds of the hero and the fight under the sea with the monster.

When at length he laid the harp down and reseated himself, the Tartars broke out into a chattering applause. An old man, taking Alfgar courteously by the hand, led him to a hut near by. The boy sank wearily on a pile of soft rugs and skins, and in a moment was lost in slumber.

When he awoke the sun was shining brightly outside and the day was evidently far advanced, but this was not what drew a cry of surprise from Alfgar. At his feet, with an arm roughly bandaged and with blood on his forehead, lay the English Dane, Hrolf!

The man opened his eyes at Alfgar's involuntary cry, and smiled. Stretching out his hand to the Saxon, who pulled him erect, Hrolf cried:

"Greetings, Flamehair! Did they catch you, too?"

Alfgar briefly related all that had happened to him, and Hrolf gave an angry exclamation as he heard of Svein's treachery. Then he told his own story in turn.

"We missed you, but thought little of it and went on. A short way farther, Olaf Gormson stumbled and fell with an arrow through his gullet. Then a whole shower of them struck us and three more men rolled over. We drew together just as a horde of these savages sprang out on us, and for a moment it was touch and go. They can fight like wildcats, these Tartars! They drove us back little by little, and of a sudden half a dozen of them cut me off from the next man, an arrow went through my shield arm, and next minute there was a rope around my neck. Sword and shield I will take my chance with, but I have never learned rope-fighting, and down I went. Something clipped me on the head, and I knew no more until I woke up a few moments since."

Alfgar saw that Hrolf was not seriously hurt, and told him of the events of the night before. Making light of his wounds, the Viking strode to the door and they left the hut together. A Tartar who was passing beckoned, and they followed him to a fire. Here a kettle hung filled with an appetising stew, and they proceeded to assuage their hunger.

For the next week their life was uneventful save for its novelty to both of them. They dwelt unmolested in the village, but were not allowed to pass its bounds. Each night the harp was brought to Alfgar, and he was glad indeed to sing, for the sight of one or two enslaved Greeks brought home to him the fact that but for his skaldship their own plight would have been a sorry one indeed.

"I was not surprised to hear that news of

Svein," said Hrolf, one afternoon, as Alfgar was refitting the harp with strings. There was a strange note in his voice, and the Saxon looked up in surprise. "I have had my eye on the man for a long time, and I fear me, Flamehair, that evil will come of him, for evil words have lain under his tongue against me."

"Why, what mean you, Hrolf?" questioned Alfgar, puzzled. "Surely he has naught against you?"

"It is an unlikely word, yet true," replied the Viking, slowly. "When last I fared forth with Harald from Tsargrad, it was no hidden matter that Svein had come to me and asked for the hand of Sigrid in marriage."

"Why, she is but a girl!"

"She is as old as yourself," chuckled Hrolf, "and you are deemed to be no infant, Flamehair! In any case, I said him nay, whereat he went away with no little anger."

"But how do you fear him now?"

"Because Sigrid is alone," returned Hrolf, moodily. "She may well be safe enough with Harald, but I misdoubt me that there is evil brewing. Svein is a great warrior, although somewhat headstrong, and clever in all his dealings. He has travelled through this country and I have heard that he speaks the tongue of this people. In sooth, I know not what I fear, but any Norseman who will so demean himself as to learn this barbarous tongue is of little good."

Alfgar laughed at the fears of the Viking, nevertheless his mind dwelt often on the matter, and he began to think of escape. But when he talked over the matter with Hrolf they decided that such a thing was of no use; they could flee nowhere, they spoke a foreign tongue, and while their arms had been left them, that very fact showed how little their captors feared their escape.

At length, after a week of this inaction, they were awakened early one morning by a chief, who led them outside. There they found most of the village people grouped about a string of heavily laden horses, and two of the little wiry beasts were assigned the captives. Hrolf gazed at his steed in blank dismay.

"In good sooth," he exclaimed disgustedly, "when I bestride that creature my feet will touch the ground on either side!"

"Not unlike that other Hrolf whom Harald Haarfagr drove from Norway," laughed Alfgar, "and who afterwards won a realm in France. Men say that he could never find a horse to hold him, so he was called the Walker."

"Walk I will not," retorted Hrolf, leaping lightly into the saddle. He was so large, and the horse so small, that when he stretched down his legs they all but reached the ground, and the Tartars made merry among themselves at his expense. They started off through the forest, and from various incidents Alfgar concluded that the journey was no short one.

"We're travelling north," said Hrolf, when the sun had risen above the trees. "I wonder where we are going?"

"Mayhap to some market or fair," decided Alfgar. "We have been so well treated that we must be valuable slaves."

Hrolf grunted indignantly. "Little they know us! What say you to escaping?"

"Plenty of time for that," rejoined Alfgar, coolly. "Just now we are helpless, but if we go far enough north we might win through to the country of Jaroslaff, and so find Harald again."

"Best be readies rest for the present, then," concluded Hrolf, polishing his shield as he rode. All that day they pushed forward through a wooded, but desolate country, keeping away from the mountains to the west, and meeting no one. At night they camped beside a river, with the horses a hundred yards off under a guard.

For two days more this kept up, but on the third afternoon the party turned sharply to the east and abandoned their north line of march. At this move Hrolf brought his horse beside that of Alfgar.

"What think you of this, Flamehair? We are no longer going towards Russland, and it lies ill in my mind."

Alfgar nodded agreement. "Possibly we will reach our destination to-night or to-morrow. They would probably figure on reaching a market town in the morning, anyway."

"Then shall we make a break to-night?" asked Hrolf.

"If you are willing I am," answered Alfgar, quietly. "If we wait until we are sold we might be separated. At any rate, we can no more than fail."

Hrolf nodded and fell silent. At the end of the day when camp was made it became evident that their destination was not so far off. The horses were unsaddled and picketed as usual, but the loads were piled in readiness for rapid packing, and the men made the best of their rough apparel and weapons. Both Alfgar and Hrolf were by this time stiff and sore, for they were not accustomed to riding, and were

indeed thankful that the Tartars did not deem it necessary to bind them at night.

The two, having eaten, rolled up in furs, the nights being very cold, and simulated sleep; but it proved a hard matter to avoid falling asleep in earnest, so weary were they. Fortunately they held a place near the outskirts of the party.

One by one the fires died down and the men fell asleep, while the lonely guard who watched the horses sang weird monotonous songs as he walked his round. The night was moonless, and it was not long before the camp was wrapped in slumber. At last Hrolf touched Alfgar's arm as a signal.

Cautiously unrolling their furs they rose to hands and knees and crept away from the dying fire, their weapons wrapped to avoid clashing against their byrnies. Only two groups of sleeping men lay between them and the horses, and these were passed without a mishap.

Rising to their feet they stepped lightly away into the night, and a moment later they were free. Hrolf seized Alfgar by the arm, with a low whisper.

"We must drive off all the horses, or else they will track and retake us. Best seize the guard and silence him."

Alfgar nodded his comprehension, and they stole forward through the grass, which was nearly to their shoulders. The lonely watchman was standing with his back towards them, leaning on a flint-tipped spear and gazing across the dark stream beside the camp, and Hrolf was on him before he heard a sound.

Then, just as he turned at the noise of swishing grass, Hrolf clapped a hand over his mouth and with the other hand gripped the Tartar's arm. Alfgar quickly bound the man with his own bowstring and thrust a gag into his mouth, then laid him on the grass. Moving quickly and silently, they loosed the hobbles that restrained the horses, and each leaped to a bare back.

The next instant a series of wild yells roused the camp, with the sound of thudding hoofbeats. The startled Tartars, springing up, uttered a shout of dismay as they saw their steeds rush away and vanish in the forest below, while the two dim figures told the tale only too clearly.

"To the west," shouted Alfgar as he rode at Hrolf's side, "away from the Tartars and their town!"

"Good enough," returned Hrolf, and between them they managed to turn the horses and gradually slackened speed. At a brisk trot they continued their flight until daybreak, holding the horses as much together as possible. Then, choosing five of the best, they turned the others off into the forest and pushed briskly onward.

"When we left Harald," said Hrolf, munching at some dried meat they had found on the surprised watcher, "he must have been still some two or three hundred miles from the Dnieper. By this time he will be well on his way to Kiev——"

"Unless he has met with more storms," broke in Alfgar. "Think you we can get to him before he reaches Norway?"

"Of a surety, if we reach him at all," laughed Hrolf. "It is in my mind that he will spend the winter with Jarisleif, as Magnus did before he took over the kingdom. In that case we can take our time."

They held on their way until noon, and by continually changing mounts managed to keep the horses at a brisk pace without wearing them out. Hrolf, who had been with Harald all through the Palestine campaign, enlivened the way wonderfully with tales of Jerusalem and the Holy Land. They slept all the afternoon, and at nightfall took up their flight again, having met no man all that day. By early morning they decided that they would rest again until daybreak, for both were still in sad need of sleep, and it was well after sunrise when they took up the journey once more, after a breakfast consisting of a large bird Hrolf brought down with his bow. Once they saw the smoke of a village, but despite their hunger they avoided it, travelling always to the north.

The afternoon was well advanced when Hrolf, with a sharp exclamation, pulled up the horses and motioned to Alfgar to keep silence.

"I heard a voice," he whispered, "and it seemed to come down wind. Hold quiet a moment."

Alfgar listened excitedly, stringing his bow and loosening his sword in its sheath. For a moment he heard nothing, then the breeze brought the sound of a deep voice which seemed to be singing. The two sat without a movement, and then of a sudden Hrolf gazed at Alfgar in amazement.

"Did you hear those words?" he muttered. "Or am I crazed?"

"I heard it!" Alfgar returned eagerly. "It was the Dane tongue—our own speech! Ah—look there!"

And he pointed into a long, open glade ahead. There, striding along and swinging

a stout long staff, was a strange figure. Clad in a long brown robe, with iron-grey hair and long grey beard, there seemed little of the Northman about the man at whom they gazed; but the words that came from his mouth were of the Northern speech, and the song he sang was the Saga of King Olaf Tryggvison!

CHAPTER XI

BASIL OF THE ERRAND

With a simultaneous shout Hrolf and Alfgar urged their steeds in between the trees, but to their surprise the man never so much as looked in their direction,

On hands and knees, Alfgar and his companion crept cautiously past the sleeping men towards the horses.

although they shouted loudly at him. Not until they reached his side did he look up. There was a momentary flash of wonder in his deeply lined but strong face, then he waved his staff and spoke in the Dane tongue, yet with a strong foreign accent.

"Peace be with you! Halt me not, friends, for I have far to go."

"Are you mad!" cried Hrolf, impatiently. "Do you meet Norsemen every day in these forests that you pass us thus? Stay, friend! Who are you?"

"Hold," broke in Alfgar, "We have spare horses, old man. Come, mount one of them. Where are your companions?"

The sturdy old man halted a moment, swept the faces of the two with a keen scrutiny, then with surprising agility leaped to the back of one of the led horses, and rode between them.

"My companions are in Syrland, which we of Greece call the Holy Land," he answered, simply. "Thanks for your assistance, and a blessing on you."

Hrolf glanced at Alfgar and tapped his head, but a quick smile crossed the wrinkled face, and Hrolf reddened with confusion.

"Nay, friends, deem me not mad," said the man, speaking slowly and with difficulty. "First, who are you?"

"Two men of Harald Hardrede's," answered Alfgar. "We were captured by Tartars and have escaped. Surely you are no Northman? How is it that you speak our tongue?"

"I speak it ill," returned the other. "I am known among the brethren as Basil of the Errand."

"A monk?" cried Hrolf, amazed, and Basil nodded smilingly. "What do you here, so far from the known world, in this land of savages?"

"I have an errand," replied Basil, tapping a flat packet strapped about his waist. "I go to England."

At this astonishing statement Hrolf's jaw

dropped and Alfgar stared at the monk, half believing that he was crazed.

"Do you mean that you go to England through these lands," asked the Saxon, "instead of taking ship from Tsargrad? Surely that is a strange thing! And how learned you the Dane tongue? Who taught it you?"

"It was taught me by Olaf Tryggvison," came the reply. At this Hrolf pulled his horse up short, his face flushing a deep red in his anger.

"Old man!" he said sternly, "make no more sport of us, lest we fail in the reverence we owe. Olaf has been dead these fifty years, for my own uncle fell beside him at Svold Sound!"

"You are wrong," and the deep eyes of Basil once more struck Hrolf as if with a blow. "See, it is in my mind that I can trust you, and as we go along I will tell you the story of my errand. Is it then true that men deem that Olaf fell at Svold?"

"Truth itself," answered Alfgar, wondering greatly at this strange comrade who had sprung into their fellowship. "Yet it is also true that some hold him to have escaped, but of this I know little."

"Then listen," said Basil, quietly. "Ten years since I was a soldier in the Emperor's army. I was taken by the Saracens and suffered many things, even to torture, but I held to my faith. I was carried far to the east, even beyond Jordan.

"Then one day the city wherein I was dwelling, a slave, was taken by a raid of Christians. I was released and found that the leader of the Christians was an old man—far older than I; but who was very terrible in battle, for he fought with both hands alike and no man stood before his blows."

At this statement Hrolf started, and Alfgar saw him dart a quick look at Basil, who continued calmly:—

"With him were others, all of whom wore the robe of monks. When we returned to this side Jordan they bore me to their castle, for I was still suffering from my tortures. There it came to pass that I joined the brotherhood. I grew to love this old man beyond other men, as did we all, and we knew that his name was Olaf, and that in his own land he had been king."

"Why, man, it's impossible!" burst forth Hrolf. "I too have heard tales of such a man, but Olaf—!" and he fell to staring at Basil.

"Nothing is impossible with the help of God," resumed the latter, quietly. "See, even I, who was a Greek, have learned from him the tongue of the Northland, and I bear his errand."

"Aye, what of that?" asked Alfgar, excitedly. "Tell us of this errand of yours, Basil!"

"Of all our brotherhood Olaf trusted and loved me best," replied the old monk. "Two years since he gave me this packet which I bear here. He told me that his ending was not far off, and he gave me the behest that when he should die I should bear this book and ring contained therein to him who is King of England—even Edward, the son of Ethelred, who was true friend to Olaf of aforetime. This was that it might be known that Olaf was indeed dead, for tokens have been sent ere this to Edward the King."

A cry of astonishment burst from his two hearers, and Alfgar caught a wondering look of helplessness from Hrolf that made him smile, even as his heart leaped for joy.

"Tell us all the tale, Basil," he urged. The monk nodded.

"So would I if you gave me time, young Saxon. Harald heard my tale, and would have had me sail forth with him. But I have no business in Russland, so I took a horse and rode to the west on my errand. God is with your leader, friends, for did He not bring him to my aid?"

The simple earnestness of the monk touched Alfgar deeply. Before he could speak Hrolf asked eagerly after news of the Vikings, which Basil denied him.

"I know nothing of them," he answered helplessly. "Stay, though! On the second day thereafter, five days since, horses came up behind me. On one of them was a man clad in armour like to yours, and on another was a maiden. They rode in haste, and the steed of the maiden was all but foundered, so that the warrior bade me change horses with the maiden. At the same time she cried to me for help, and as I was seeking to understand the matter the godless man struck me from my horse and they vanished."

A hoarse cry broke from Hrolf. Alfgar was amazed to see him come close to Basil, lay his hand on the monk's, and exclaim in a low, tense voice:—

"And the maiden—what was she like? Think, monk, for the love of Heaven!"

Something in the man's tones must have wakened long-dead stirrings in Basil's heart, for he gazed at Hrolf's excited face and replied at once.

"She was slender, and dark of hair, and wore a kirtle of blue trimmed with silver."

"Sigrid!"

The cry broke from Alfgar and Hrolf at the same instant.

"Which way went they?" cried Hrolf, savagely, his face suddenly gone white and terrible. "It was my daughter, monk! Where are they? Speak quickly!"

"I know not," and Basil shook his head. "I had my errand to think of, and I paid no heed to them. In truth, the man hurt me sorely. Yet people have given me food and drink, so that I lack for nothing, though I do not understand their tongue. Poor folk, I fear they are no Christian people who——"

But his rambling speech was cut short by a cry of wild rage from Hrolf. Alfgar sat his horse quietly, knowing that for the present there was naught to do. He had understood only too well the purport of Basil's story. Harald had led his men upon the little port, one of many scattered about the shores of the Black Sea as trading posts for Byzantium, and Svein had seized his opportunity to carry off Sigrid. Knowing the tribes of the interior as he did, speaking their language well, he might even hope to carry Sigrid back to Byzantium or some other place in the Empire. Small wonder that Hrolf burst into a storm of wild curses and threats against the Viking! But a sudden thought came to Alfgar, and he drew Basil aside.

"You say the two were alone, and passed you?"

"Aye, young friend, and in this direction. Was the maiden in trouble?"

"Of the worst, Basil," and Alfgar quickly explained matters. "Say, can you use a sword still? Will you help us search for her and mayhap rescue her?"

"Nay," interrupted the old monk, staring over Alfgar's head at the distant mountains, "fain would I go with ye, but first comes my errand. Olaf the son of Tryggvi is dead, and I bear his token."

"But you cannot!" cried Alfgar, exasperated by the simple confidence of the man. "You have the whole world to cross! Why, any of these Tartars would sell you as a slave in a minute! Come with us, and we will go together, and you will reach England safe enough."

"Peace!" exclaimed Basil of the Errand, pushing aside the detaining hand of the Saxon. The latter cast a look at Hrolf, but the latter sat with his head sunk on his breast, oblivious.

"Peace! If your way goes with mine, so be it; if not, detain me no more, for my errand waits!"

"The horse is yours," said Alfgar, quietly. "It is the least we can do. But wait here until we can talk matters over."

"Not a moment!" returned Basil, a fanatical glare in his eyes. "Let me go, and my blessing be upon you!"

He raised his staff, and Alfgar bent his head. Hrolf had pulled up his steed and was fingering his sword and staring into the forest; he paid no heed to them, and Alfgar was shocked at the sight of the man's face, so drawn and convulsed was it. The next instant Basil of the Errand had turned his horse, and the two Vikings were alone.

"Come, Hrolf," said Alfgar, simply, taking the man's hand. "Cheer up, old warrior! There is still hope, for you and I still have our weapons, and we are Northmen of good heart! Shame be on us if we sat down and wept while Svein hurried farther from us!"

Hroft started as if stung by a whip, for Alfgar had tried to rouse him and succeeded.

"What chance have we!" he returned, bitterly. "Svein is somewhere in this land, that is all we know. But with him is Sigrid—little Sigrid, whom I had thought to take home to Danelagh once more, to the home my fathers won from yours! Aye," he added, a sudden flash coming into his face, "there is still hope, and there is still vengeance! Come, Flamehair, and swear to me that you will follow this man while I follow him, that you will take vengeance on him if I fall, and that not fire nor sword shall stay your blade from his heart's blood!"

Alfgar himself was choking at the thought of Sigrid, and he "handselled" the agreement in a hearty grip right willingly. The score against Svein was mounting high! But he soothed Hrolf with fair words, and just as the westing sun settled to the tree-tops they took up the journey again.

"We cannot shun the villages now," said Alfgar, decidedly. "First we must seek news of Svein. Is not that a smoke to the west?"

"Aye," rejoined Hrolf. "But what use, Flamehair? We cannot speak the tongue of these people, and so can do little questioning."

"We will find a way," Alfgar replied with confidence. "Mayhap my skaldship will prove of more avail than your sword, Hrolf. They will hardly attack us if we come to them in peace."

Hrolf grunted, but said nothing. Half an hour later the smoke was close by, and they

By H. BEDFORD JONES

Alfgar began a song in his own tongue, and at the first words a cry came from a hut near by, and a man burst eagerly through the crowd.

soon came in sight of a large village, almost a town. A shrill cry went up as they were seen, and men poured out to meet them; but they rode boldly forward and made no move towards their weapons, so that the men were evidently puzzled. Like their late captors these people were Tartars, and a few moments later the two riders were surrounded by the crowd.

In vain they tried to make themselves understood, and finally Hrolf made signs of eating, which were perfectly comprehensible. Finding that their visitors were peaceably disposed, the Tartars flung aside their weapons and led them into the village. Here they were treated hospitably enough, the folk examining their weapons and clothes with great curiosity. After finishing a good meal, Alfgar made signs of harping, and it was not long before a harp was brought him.

As soon as his clear voice rose on the evening air, the whole village crowded about the fire. Alfgar sang one or two Norse songs, then began the song of Caedmon, in his own native Saxon. At the first words there came a cry from a near-by hut, and a man burst eagerly through the crowd.

"Who are you?" he cried wildly, and Alfgar saw about his neck the iron collar of a slave. "Who are you who speak the Saxon tongue?"

Alfgar sprang up in delight and answered him. It appeared that the man was a slave from far-away Germany, who had travelled from hand to hand until finally he had been sold to the Tartars. Alfgar in turn told him who they were, and the man passed on the information to the Tartars. The village chiefs drew back a little, gazing on the visitors with awe and wonder when they heard that they were from the great Tsargrad. Here Hrolf, who had a smattering of Saxon, put in an eager question.

"Have you seen aught of a warrior and a maiden, travelling alone?"

"Not I," returned the man, "but I will ask these folk."

He turned to them with a question, and at once a babel of voices went up. To Alfgar's surprise the attitude of the assembly changed on the instant. All drew back from the three Northmen, the women vanished, and weapons flashed out. The German slave turned back to him trembling.

"Lord," he said, "the chiefs say that such a man passed here two days since, at the head of a band from another tribe. With them was a woman, borne in a litter between horses. They drove off many horses belonging to the chiefs. Say them fair, lord, and quickly, else we be all slain!"

The slave's fear was so evident that Alfgar saw there was indeed danger if their position were not explained.

"Tell them we are foes of that man," he exclaimed, swiftly. "Say that we are in pursuit of him. How many were his men?"

"A score, lord," answered the German, when a few words had passed. At once the hostility of the Tartars was dropped and their suspicion slowly evaporated. They proceeded to make their visitors comfortable with furs and wraps, and requested through the slave that Alfgar sing further. But this he refused.

"Give the dogs no more now," growled Hrolf. "We have other things to think of. These look like bold men enough, Flamehair, and if they can fight like those who took us they should be good followers. Ask if they will accompany us in pursuit of Svein."

"Good idea!" cried Alfgar, delightedly. He saw at once that with the help of the Tartars they could easily trace the Norseman and his band, and he quickly put the question through the German. As the latter translated his request, he was overjoyed to see that it met with the ready approval of ths Tartars, but a long conversation passed between the chiefs before the acceptance was made.

"They say yes, lord," returned the slave at length. "The tribe whose men accompanied him you seek dwells some two-score miles away, among the hills. They are brave men, and live in a castle built by the gods, and made raids thence."

"A castle built by the gods!" repeated Alfgar. "How is that?"

The German, who had not overmuch intelligence, questioned the chiefs again, and finally interpreted with a laugh.

"Of olden times, lord, there were folk in this land called Goths. It was my error. This tribe with whom we are can raise men among other tribes if you will lead them against the castle of the raiders, for it is old and ruined, but very strong. Perchance it was built by the Greeks."

"What say you, Hrolf?" asked Alfgar, explaining matters to his comrade, who had missed much of the quick conversation. "Shall we accept the offer?"

"Yes, by the eye of Odin!" burst forth Hrolf, fingering his sword-hilt eagerly. "I would lead them against Asgard itself, were Svein there! I like this matter of the castle ill enough, but mayhap we can whip the Tartar dogs into shape."

"Possibly the castle is poor enough," rejoined Alfgar, thoughtfully. "I have heard of the Goths, who swept over the Empire centuries since and who guarded these lands for the Empire when they were shattered. It must be that Svein knew this tribe of outlaws, for such they seem to be considered, when he was in this country before. That would explain his leadership."

When the German signified to the chiefs that the two strangers would lead them, the village at once fell into a bustle of excitement. Men were dispatched in every direction on horseback, bearing messages; and before Alfgar and Hrolf were conducted to a hut they were informed that at the next sunset the men would begin to come in from other villages.

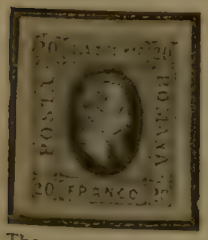
"Well, bid them make haste," growled Hrolf, moodily. "We have little time to waste, Flamehair!"

"Best not to spoil matters by over-impatience," answered Alfgar. "Luck is with us in finding such assistance when we needed it most, and to-morrow we can well afford to rest. In sooth, I had ridden so much of late that my whole body feels stiff and sore."

(*To be continued*)

SOME VARIETIES OF ROUMANIA

IT will be strange to see a new head on the postage stamps of Roumania, after forty-eight years of King Carol; but that wise and successful king is now gathered to his fathers, and his nephew, Ferdinand, who married a daughter of our own Duke of Edinburgh, reigns in his stead. Before very long, therefore, we shall be allotting spaces in our albums to the stamps of King Ferdinand I., who has but recently celebrated his forty-ninth birthday.



The 20 paras stamp of the first issue of United Roumania, with portrait of Prince Cuza.

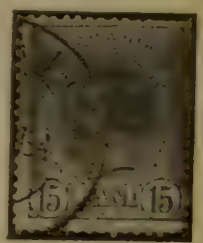
In some of the very early stamp albums one looks in vain for the heading, "Roumania," the issues of Moldavia, Moldo-Wallachia, and the early stamps of Roumania under Prince Cuza, being therein lumped together under the title, "Danubian Principalities."

Modern Roumania, of course, is a union of the old principalities of Moldavia and Wallachia, which were under the suzerainty of Turkey. Prince Cuza (1859-1866), the first ruler of the united territories, did little to advance the prosperity or enhance the glory of his dominions, but on the accession of Prince Carol of Hohenzollern a new era dawned for Roumania. In the year 1878 the country was freed from the overlordship of the Sultan and declared, by the Treaty of Berlin, to be an independent state. Three years later (1881) Prince Carol was declared King, and from that time Roumania has steadily advanced in political influence and material prosperity. It is worth while to keep that brief outline of Roumania's history in mind when studying the country's postage stamps, which strikingly reflect its growing importance, and illustrate the more notable passages in its evolution from a feudatory principality to an independent kingdom.

The quaint old hand-struck stamps issued for Moldavia (1858-59) and for Moldo-Wallachia (1862-63) are scarce, and becoming rapidly scarcer. Moreover, the forger has exercised his ungentle skill upon them, so that for more reasons than one the young collector may be well advised to pass over these preliminary issues and begin his Roumanian pages at the first stamps for the united principality bearing the head of Prince Cuza and issued on January 1st, 1865.

Those of you who have philatelic-priced catalogues—and those who haven't ought to get one at once—will note that the stamps of the Prince Cuza issue are, with the exception of the rose-red variety of the 20 paras stamp, commoner and cheaper in the unused than in the used condition. The one word "remainders" explains this state of affairs; but the great majority of these must by this time have been absorbed, and a rise in price is not improbable.

There are two very distinct varieties, by the way, of the 20 paras value. In the first of these, described as Type A in Messrs. Stanley Gibbons' catalogue, the central oval carrying Prince Cuza's portrait does not touch the outer frame. Also the letter "I" of DECI at the head of the stamp is unduly elongated. In the second variety, Type B, the central oval *does* touch the frame and the "I" of DECI is of normal size. The stamp illustrated on this page is of the A variety.



A 15 bani Roumanian stamp with portrait of King Carol.

The Prince Carol stamps of Roumania began on August 1st, 1866, and in the issues for that year and for the years 1868 to 1871, we see

a gradual change in the Prince's hirsute adornments from very small "mutton chop whiskers" to a full beard. All these stamps have now been closely studied by advanced specialists, and their varieties of paper and perforation give the list a rather formidable appearance to the young beginner. Here, as in other cases, one must be content to secure the standard varieties as one's means will allow, and leave the scarcer kinds to chance "finds" or the greater purchasing power of the future. Four different types have been discovered in the 20 paras stamp of the 1866 issue, and two in the 2 bani stamp of the 1868 series. As all the stamps of Roumania down to the 1871 set were produced by lithography at the capital, Bucharest, it is quite on the cards that other variations of type remain to be discovered.

Typography, in lieu of lithography, was adopted for the printing of Roumanian stamps as from the issue of October, 1872, this series being produced by Mons. Hulot, of Paris, pending the completion of arrangements for typographing future issues at the government printery at Bucharest.

One of the 1906 Commemorative issues of Roumania, showing portraits of Prince Carol in 1866, and of King Carol in 1906.

It is in the stamps of the 1872 design, which design continued to be used until 1879, that the two well-known Roumanian "errors of colour" occur—namely, the 5 bani, printed in blue instead of bistre, and, later (series of 1879, with colours changed), the same value printed in rose-red instead of green. Now it seems a very odd circumstance that, though in each case the 5 bani was wrongly printed in the colour of the 10 bani, yet I have never heard it claimed that the converse error existed—namely, the 10 bani printed in the colour of the 5 bani. Yet in other well-known instances of an "error of colour" arising from a single cliché of a certain value being misplaced in the sheet of another value, we generally find that the error is interchangeable for the two values. Thus it is with the famous "wood-block" errors of the Cape of Good Hope. There is the one penny red misprinted in the colour of the fourpenny blue, and also the fourpenny blue misprinted in the colour of the one penny red. I do not put forward the point as one of any vast significance, but it certainly is curious.

These two Roumanian "errors," whether genuine or not, have given rise to considerable argument and criticism among philatelists. The late Mr. H. Fraenkel, in a long article published some years ago in the *American Journal of Philately*, went very fully into their pros and cons, denouncing the rose-red error altogether, while admitting that there had genuinely been an error in the blue colour. "I should like," he wrote in conclusion, "to close with this advice to collectors: Avoid the so-called rose 'error.' The blue 'error' buy only if it is dark blue; and then only if the greatest experts declare it genuine and it comes from the best source."

I may add that the 5 bani blue, error of colour, is now quoted in our leading philatelic catalogue at £7 10s. unused; £12 used. The 5 bani rose-red "error," which Mr. Fraenkel denounced as spurious, is priced at £5 unused, but there is no "used" quotation.

The later issues of Roumania call for less comment. It is worth noting, however, that from 1870 to 1890 there was some indecision as to the form in which the name-of-country should appear on the national postage stamps. For all the issues down to 1871 the legend had been "Posta Romana." For the 1872-79 printings the "Posta" was dropped and the name of the country, "Romania," used. Then "Posta Romana" cropped up again in the issues of 1880 to 1889, being finally replaced by "Romania" in 1890.

In 1891 appeared the first of Roumania's commemorative sets of stamps. These were labels of quite normal size and style, bearing merely the King's head, the name "Romania," and an inscription referring to the twenty-fifth anniversary of the accession of King Carol the First, which joyful occasion the stamps were intended to commemorate. The five values of this set of stamps (1½, 3, 5, 10, and 15 bani) bear no indications of value, and it is only by the known colours that one can differentiate them. This recalls the early stamps of Barbados, Trinidad, etc., and is a most unusual feature of a modern issue of postage stamps. There were larger and more ornate commemorative issues for Roumania in the years 1903 and 1906. The latter year was one of special activity, for it brought us two distinct commemorative sets, and two sets of charity stamps issued under the auspices of one of the gentlest and sweetest of European Queens, "Carmen Sylva." The second of the ordinary commemorative sets of 1906—that issued in honour of the completion of forty years' rule by Carol von Hohenzollern as Prince and King—forms quite a panorama of Roumanian history, and abounds in excellent portraits of the King. One value that I have singled out for illustration, the 15 bani, shows Prince Carol in 1866 and King Carol in 1906.

Roumanian stamps are a big subject; and it has been quite impossible to do more than touch lightly on their outstanding features. I shall be very pleased to help any Captainite with information on any perplexing point.

A Kink in His Courage

By HAROLD AVERY

Illustrated by W. F. Thomas

I

"DID any of you fellows hear that queer noise in the night?" inquired Danby, as he drew his shirt over his head.

The winter term was within three days of its close, and the occupants of B dormitory in Mr. Glatton's house at Ronsbury College were dressing by gaslight.

"I heard Chad snoring," answered Brindle. "I'd have got up and given him treatment with the back of a brush, only it was too jolly cold."

"I don't mean that——"

"Then what do you mean?"

If Danby could have foreseen the consequences of his casual remark he would probably have kept his mouth shut; as it was he saw no harm in describing something which had merely struck him as rather curious.

"Why, there was a sort of chinking rattle out in the passage as if someone were dragging a chain along the bare boards at the side of the matting. I heard it twice."

"Get away—you were dreaming!"

"I wasn't, I was wide awake. And once there was a funny noise, a kind of whimper."

"Think it was a ghost, eh?" sneered Brindle. "Trying to make out the place is haunted."

Danby protested he had said nothing of the kind, while Brindle stuck to his assertion, their voices rising to a pitch which at length attracted the attention of Samborne, the dormitory prefect.

"What's all this yapping about?" inquired Samborne, buttoning his collar as he moved towards the scene of the dispute. "What's the row?"

"This chap's trying to make me believe there was a ghost in the corridor last night," said Brindle. "It was wailing, and dragging a chain over the bare boards."

Danby endeavoured to give his own version of the occurrence, but the prefect seemed to regard the story as some silly invention.

"Bosh!" snorted Samborne. "Ghosts with chain fittings are a thing of the past, my boy; about as much out of date as stage coaches, and wouldn't scare a baby. I should have thought you could have hit on something a bit more original; no, shut up. I don't want to hear any more. Look alive, or you'll be late."

The clamour of tongues ceased, and in all probability nothing further would have been heard of the matter but for Brindle. He was rather a spiteful person, a born nagger, who, when he saw the chance of making fun at another fellow's expense, would rag the joke to death; in addition to this he had a grudge against Danby, due to some disagreement over a deal in foreign stamps, one of which had been found to be nothing better than a worthless "fudge." During the morning, Brindle made merry, repeating to one and another the yarn of the corridor ghost; Danby attempted indignant denials of any intention to imply that the house was haunted, but, on being invited to admit that he must either have been dreaming or the victim of his own imagination, stuck doggedly to his guns, declaring that he was wide awake, and had certainly heard the sounds in question. By middle day, thanks to Brindle's untiring efforts to "keep the game alive," the story had reached the ears of the prefects, and that same evening Ackling, head of the house, in the course of a conversation with Mrs. Glatton, made some casual reference to the affair as an amusing instance of juvenile credulity.

During the next two days Danby heard a good deal more about the corridor ghost than he would have desired, and was forced to endure a considerable amount of chaff. Fellows seemed determined to accept Brindle's account of the manner in which the announcement had first been made. It was useless for Danby to declare he had said nothing about a ghost. Brindle vowed he had—that it had gibbered outside the dormitory door, and clanked a chain. It is not expected of a normal public school boy to profess a belief in spooks, and

Danby found himself in danger of losing caste among his friends; the fact that he had hitherto always been popular rendering this discovery all the more unpleasant and hard to bear.

"Whatever put that rot into your head?" inquired his chum, Evans Minor. "Oh, yes—you try to make out now you don't believe the place is haunted, but you thought so at the time. Why don't you own up that you were dreaming?"

To crown everything, when crossing the hall on the last night of the term, Danby found himself button-holed by Mr. Glatton.

"What's this I'm told about you?" began the latter. "Seen a ghost or something of the sort, eh?"

"I didn't say I'd seen one, sir," stammered Danby. "Only that I'd heard something."

"Ah—yes—groans, clanking chains, and that sort of thing. 'Pon my word, a boy of your age ought not to suffer from nerves. What's the matter with you?"

The speaker was busy, and moved off in the direction of his study without waiting for a reply to his question.

Danby fumed with impotent rage and vexation as he watched the retreating figure. He cherished a great admiration for his house master, who he had hitherto fondly imagined regarded him as a promising sportsman, a cub of the right sort; that Mr. Glatton should be led to think of him as a neurotic nincompoop was a positive disaster.

Breakfast on the morning of breaking up is usually a joyous meal, but Danby sat at table looking sullen and dejected. The night before, soon after the light had been extinguished in the dormitory, Brindle had played the fool, rattling a watch-chain on the floor, and exclaiming: "Hark! it's coming!" The sally had evoked only a mild rebuke from Samborne, who himself, when sending a youngster to fetch more water from the bath-room in the morning, had seen fit to remark, "If you meet the ghost in the corridor don't drop the blooming jug!" It was all very sickening. Things, trivial enough in themselves, are sometimes remembered against a boy at school for an indefinite period, and Danby, whose ambition it was in twelve months' time to win the cap of his house Fifteen, saw before him the prospect of being labelled during the remainder of his career at Ronsbury as a fellow with what might be termed a kink in his courage, an addle-pated alarmist, the promoter of a ridiculous ghost story. So, while the other fellows at his table laughed and chattered, he munched his food in silence, a prey to gloomy reflections.

His journey home was a long one, and could be only accomplished in the day by travelling by one of two trains. He would have preferred to catch the nine o'clock; Elson, however, a member of the Fifth Form, who came from the same town and with whom he was accustomed to travel, would not be hurried, and decided in favour of the 10.40.

On this particular morning Danby seemed fated to suffer a series of minor annoyances and misfortunes. He had decidedly the worst of a final passage of arms with Brindle, who was capable of discharging caustic witticism at the rate of three to an opponent's one; indulging in some form of gymnastic exercise on one of the empty play-box racks in the basement, he got caught on a nail, and rent his clothes in so serious a manner that the matron, who rendered first-aid with a needle and thread, administered a verbal chastisement of unusual severity; hardly had he left Mrs. Morton's parlour when he was pounced down upon for having forgotten to return a library book, rapped on the head with the volume itself, and forced to pay a fine.

With a temper not improved by these mishaps he wandered out of doors, little dreaming that something worse still was in store. It should here be explained that, to avoid the difficulty of transporting a large quantity of baggage at the last moment, it was the custom at Ronsbury for the heavy luggage to be carted to the station on the afternoon previous to the day of departure, every boy possessing a small hand-bag for the reception of slippers, night gear, and similar belongings. Danby strolled about in solitude till a glance at the clock above the main entrance to the school buildings inclined him to preparations for the commencement of his journey. In a leisurely manner he returned to his house, spent a few moments in the cloak-room gathering up his overcoat, rug, and umbrella, then went up to the dormitory to find his hand-bag. It was nowhere to be seen. He felt sure he had left it on the chair beside his bed. He hunted high and low, then was seized with some vague recollection of having carried the bag down into the junior day-room. Here again his search proved fruitless. By this time every boy with the exception of himself had left the house, and, beginning to get flustered, he rushed about till at length the discovery was made that Hatch, the man-servant, had found the bag lying about in one of the passages,

and transferred it to the hall. The hunt had occupied more time than Danby could afford if he meant to catch his train; it was close on the half-hour when the front gate clashed behind him, and, after running every step of the way into town, he arrived at the booking-office with hardly sufficient breath left to demand his ticket. The 10.40 was in, but it was impossible to travel for hours with nothing to read; he made a rush for the bookstall, then dashed back to the train.

"Come on!" cried Elson, who was standing with the door of a compartment held open. "Where on earth have you been?"

Something prompted Danby to feel in the small pocket of his overcoat; he fumbled for a moment, with a blank look on his face.

"Wait a jiff!" he exclaimed. "I've lost my ticket—must have dropped it when I paid for these papers."

"Never mind your ticket!" almost shrieked Elson. "Tell the guard—get in, man, or you'll be left behind."

Deaf to this advice Danby flew back to the bookstall, shouts of "Take your seats—stand clear" ringing in his ears as he made hurried inquiries. The clerk believed someone had picked up a ticket, and given it to the station-master.

"There he is! No—not that way; the other end of the platform."

There was a blind scamper, ending in a violent collision with a moving luggage barrow; a whistle screeched, and the train moved out of the station, affording a fleeting glimpse of Elson with a "now-you've-done-it" expression on his face as he leant half out of the window. Before the back of the rear guard's van had disappeared from sight, Danby realised quite clearly that he had forfeited any chance of reaching home that night.

The station-master offered sympathetic and kindly advice—telegraph home, return to the school, and travel the following day. Short of chartering a special train, which a cash balance of two and fourpence halfpenny rendered impossible, there was really no other course to pursue.

II

Mr. Glatton did not seem overwhelmed with joy at beholding Danby's face once more; in fact, his greeting showed signs of considerable irritation.

"Good gracious me!" he exclaimed. "A boy of your age should be capable of catching a train. If I'd known you were such a duffer I'd have put you in charge of someone to take you to the station."

Feeling that his presence in the house was not appreciated, the boy wandered out of doors; the only living creature who seemed to welcome his unexpected return was Carlo, the yard dog, who emerged from his kennel with friendly waggings of his tail. Danby paused a few moments to pat the retriever, then proceeded on an aimless stroll round the school premises. Everything was locked up; the whole place seemed forlorn and deserted. After a time, the solitude began to weigh upon his mind; it seemed as if someone must be watching his movements; he found himself listening for footsteps. Bother it all, could it be possible that there was some ground for Mr. Glatton's suggestion, and that he was beginning to suffer from "nerves"?

Danby pulled himself together, and a lucky discovery in the shape of a stray ball enabled him to obtain warmth and exercise by a solitary "keep up" on one of the fives courts. How he managed to while away the remainder of that dreary day he himself hardly knew. Mrs. Glatton lent him a book which he found to be interesting, but he was heartily glad when the early evening closed in, and the dreary outside world was lost in darkness.

After what had happened earlier in the day, Danby had thought it advisable, as far as possible, to keep out of his house-master's way, but, shortly before tea, when wandering in the neighbourhood of the latter's study, he chanced to overhear a remark which lacerated his already wounded self-respect. The door was ajar, and Mrs. Glatton, standing just inside the room, asked a question:—

"Where will he sleep to-night?"

"In his own dormitory as usual, I suppose. Stay," continued the speaker, after a moment's pause, "I almost think we had better make some other arrangement. The boy may not relish being in that part of the house alone. He's frightened of ghosts, and has some absurd belief the place is haunted. Better have a bed made for him in the room next to ours."

Danby tingled with mingled shame and indignation; when Mrs. Glatton spoke to him, he declared, firmly though politely, that there was no necessity for her to put herself to any unnecessary trouble on his account, and that he would be quite comfortable in B dormitory.

A few hours later he ascended the stairs in excellent spirits. There was something rather attractive in the idea of having a whole

dormitory to himself, with no prefect to enforce the usual discipline. He had provided himself with a candle, and, by dint of a little "skipping," intended to finish his novel before he went to sleep. It was not until he was half undressed that he began to experience an unpleasant feeling creeping over him, a sense of nervous depression similar to that which had assailed him earlier in the day. The silence of the big room appeared almost uncanny; the long rows of vacant beds suggested a vague and unpleasant idea that their intended occupants were somewhere in hiding. Danby strolled about and hummed a tune, but later, when between the sheets with his lighted candle on the chair beside him, he found it difficult to keep his attention fixed on his book; once or twice he peered into the surrounding shadow. What on earth was that curious tapping sound? Pooh! merely a blind-cord swaying in the draught. After struggling through a couple of chapters he closed his book, blew out the light, and, after a brief period of wakefulness, fell asleep.

He awoke suddenly in the midst of a rather curious dream in which he imagined that Hatch was bowling a pile of luggage on a railway barrow along the landing, and on reaching the head of the stairs proceeded calmly to dispose of his load by tipping it down the staircase, trunks and portmanteaux descending to the hall with a succession of loud thumps. Danby sat up in bed, rubbing his eyes, and with a queer conviction that the sounds which had roused him from slumber had not been imaginary. What could have happened? He leant out of bed to strike a match, and, glancing at his watch, found that it was close on one o'clock.

He lay back and so remained for perhaps a couple of minutes, then suddenly raised himself on his elbow, at the same time holding his breath. Faint at first, but becoming every instant more distinct there fell on his ear the rattle of a chain, *chinkle—chankle—chink!* It passed outside the dormitory door, seemed to pause for a moment, then proceeded along the corridor, and finally died away into silence.

To be frank, for half a minute Danby was fairly scared; there had been no sound of footsteps, only this unearthly noise of a chain being drawn along over the bare boards. What could it be? A cold chill went down his back, and his heart seemed to be bumping against his ribs. Then, in a somewhat curious manner, his feelings suddenly underwent a change. Some momentary recollection of Brindle's foolery with the watch-chain suggested the idea of a practical joke, and, forgetful of the fact that he himself was the only boy left in the house, it appeared quite possible to Danby that a fresh attempt was being made to "pull his leg." He was quite capable of resenting treatment of this kind; with no clear idea of what he meant to do, he sprang out of bed, and dragged on his trousers, determined to investigate the mystery.

Reaching the door, he opened it, and stood for a moment listening; the corridor was in darkness, but he fancied that he caught the sound of footsteps descending the neighbouring stairs. He rushed along the passage, and immediately his suspicion was confirmed. There was someone moving about; clear from the hall below came the sound of a door being unlocked. The midnight prowler must have entered a small room devoted to music practice; ghost, practical joker, or robber, a wild resolve fired Danby's breast to effect a capture. In his bare feet he flew down the stairs, and a moment later, trembling with excitement, turned the key in the outside of the lock.

He sprang back almost as if his hand had grasped a hot iron, and at that moment the darkness was relieved by a gleam of light. In the confusion of the moment, it did not seem at all strange that Hatch should be wandering about at this unearthly hour, and with a lighted taper in his hand; the thought immediately suggested by his appearance was that he too had been roused from sleep by strange noises. Danby ran forward to meet him.

"I've got him!" he panted. "Locked him in the music-room."

"Got who?" returned Hatch, with an expression of blank amazement.

"I don't know—the beggar who's been acting the ghost—or—I say, d'you suppose it's a burglar?"

"Ghost—burglar?" echoed the man-servant. "Are you a-dreaming, Mr. Danby, or what——"

The inquiry was interrupted by a loud and prolonged thumping, as of someone wrathfully hammering on woodwork with his fist. From within the music-room came a voice by no means ghostly in tone.

"Open—this—door!"

Without a moment's hesitation Hatch hurriedly obeyed the command, and Mr. Glatton, fully dressed, stalked out into the hall.

"Who locked that door?" he demanded, sharply.

"I did, sir," answered Danby, in a weak voice.

The house master gave vent to a sound which can only be compared to the first snort of a moving locomotive.

"I'm very sorry, sir; I thought you were——" the speaker's voice faltered, and became silent.

"Seems to have mistaken you for a burglar, sir, or else a ghost," volunteered Hatch.

Mr. Glatton glared at his captor for a moment with a mingled look of surprise and indignation; then his expression became scornful.

"In all my life——" he began, lost the thread of his remark, and finally burst out with—"What's taken you, Danby? Are you going crazy?"

"No, sir, I heard someone dragging a chain about, and, as it was the middle of the night, I came down——"

"Middle of the night!" retorted Mr. Glatton. "It's morning—time you were dressing if you mean to get your breakfast, and catch the early train."

"Not long since I was up knocking at his dormitory door," murmured Hatch.

A vague suspicion rose in Danby's mind that master and man were both in league against him, then there flashed across his mind what might be the true and simple explanation of the puzzle—his watch had stopped, and he had been further deceived by the darkness of the early winter morning!

"But it's quite true someone's been dragging a chain about," he persisted, in a dogged attempt to offer some excuse for his conduct. "I heard it quite distinctly."

"Give me your taper, Hatch," exclaimed Mr. Glatton. "I'll endeavour to satisfy him that his ghost is pure imagination."

"Now," continued the master, as he reached the head of the staircase, with Danby following closely at his heels, "we'll very soon see——"

From somewhere away in the darkness came a faint *chinkle, chink*, followed by a subdued *thump, thump, thump*.

Shielding the taper with his hand, Mr. Glatton advanced cautiously along the corridor, seemingly now less sceptical than he had been a moment ago. On nearing the end of the passage, Danby caught his breath for a moment as, out of the darkness, there shone a pair of luminous green eyes; then the mystery was solved in a moment. Snug and warm before the coil of hot water-pipes at the end of the corridor lay Carlo, with several feet of steel chain trailing away from his collar. Once more, in a rather guilty and apologetic manner, he thumped the floor with his tail.

Followed closely by Danby, the master walked cautiously in the direction from which the strange sounds came.

Mr. Gratton retreated to the head of the stairs, and summoned Hatch.

"Up there again is he, sir?" murmured the man-servant, as he appeared on the scene.

"Must have slipped into the house when I opened the back door. He got in, somehow, one night not long ago—staple of his chain got loose, and he dragged it out; but I thought I'd fixed it in too firm for him to shift. Here, just come along down."

Meekly the dog obeyed the command, while Mr. Gratton moved away into B dormitory and, with the aid of his taper, lit the gas. Danby waited anxiously for some fresh comment on his behaviour. Within the last twenty-four hours he had certainly played the fool to an unusual extent: he had mislaid his bag, lost his ticket and his train, mistaken the morning for the middle of the night, and locked his house master in the music-room; the thought that he had, at any rate, proved that his accounts of clanking chains had not been mere fabrications of a disordered brain did not suffice to put him at his ease.

"So between us we've laid the ghost at last," observed Mr. Glatton.

"I heard that queer noise, sir; and, as I thought everyone must be in bed, I thought I'd better try to find out what it was."

"And in the course of your investigations you made me a prisoner, and informed Hatch that you'd caught a burglar."

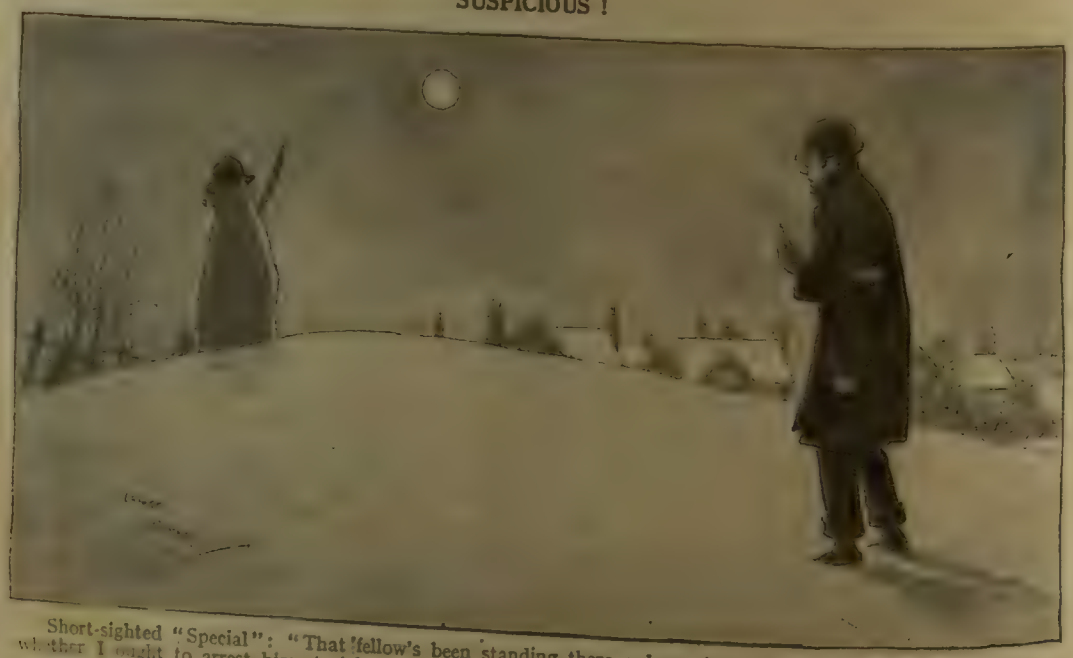
The culprit muttered some scarcely audible apology.

"Danby," began Mr. Glatton, suddenly, "I thought you were suffering from what we might call softening of the backbone, for which mistake I sincerely beg your pardon. There are persons who, under similar circumstances, would have decided to remain in bed with their heads under the clothes. Now look alive, and get on with your dressing."

* * * * *

At the commencement of the spring term various versions of Danby's exploit were current in the school, some of those exchanged among the smaller boys bordering on the marvellous. It was said that he had missed his train, and returned to the school with the express intention of solving the mystery of the haunted corridor; it was even reported that he had detected Mr. Glatton attempting to act the part of the ghost, and locked him up for the remainder of the night in the boot-room. One thing was certain: Danby had distinguished himself; he had redeemed his reputation.

SUSPICIOUS!



Short-sighted "Special": "That fellow's been standing there a long time. He's armed, too! I wonder whether I ought to arrest him straight off or blow my whistle for assistance."

"THE CAPTAIN" WAR PORTFOLIO

Some of the Most Stirring Episodes of the War, depicted by famous artists

A bluejacket from one of the three British cruisers sunk by submarines seized the ensign of his ship and swam with it, held in his teeth, for nearly two hours before he was picked up by a rescue boat.

TWO AGAINST TWELVE

Two Irish Dragoons, one wounded, defended a farmhouse against a dozen Uhlans until the latter brought up a machine gun, when, rather than allow the house to be wrecked, the Irishmen rushed into the open and continued the fight till both were shot.

HEROIC ENGINEERS

Ordered to destroy a bridge to delay the advancing Germans, a party of the Royal Engineers laid a charge, but were killed by German sharpshooters before they could fire it. A dozen others dashed forward, but only one reached the bridge alive, and even as he lit the fuse and blew up the bridge he, too, perished.

French Infantry, under a hot fire, crossing the Aisne at Soissons by means of the one

THE COSSACKS, IN AN ENCOUNTER WITH THE DEATH'S-HEAD

HUSSARS, DEMONSTRATE THEIR COURAGE AND FIGHTING SKILL

remaining girder of a railway bridge which had been blown up by the retreating Germans.

AN AUSTRALIAN VICTORY

Hoisting the Union Jack at Herbertshöhe, in the Island of New Pommern, in the Bismarck Archipelago. The landing party, consisting of Australian sailors, were strongly resisted and had to fight their way through four miles of bush.

THE CHRISTMAS PRIZE

A YULETIDE ADVENTURE AT SEA

By PERCY F. WESTERMAN — Illustrated by John de Walton

I

CHRISTMAS Day with the temperature at 104 degrees on the mess deck! H.M.S. *Whippet*—officially described as a twin-screw protected cruiser, 3rd class, 2,240 tons, and of 5,500 indicated horse-power—lay at anchor off the island of Aihiou, in the New Hebrides.

The *Whippet* bore the reputation of being a "happy ship." Her ship's police were on board simply "for the honour of the thing," the commander's defaulters'-book was as clean as the snowy planks of the quarter deck. The officers were all that British naval officers are supposed to be, and the crew swore not at them but by them.

The cruiser was engaged in suppressing the baneful Kanaka traffic. Small schooners, manned by cosmopolitan crews known throughout the Pacific as "blackbirders," found a remunerative work in kidnapping hundreds of South Sea Islanders and disposing of them as indentured servants—they might just as well have been termed slaves—to the mining centres of the South American Republics bordering on the Pacific coast.

One of the most troublesome of the "blackbirders" was the schooner *Star of Hope*, manned by a crew of Malays and officered by a German, a half-caste Spaniard, and a broken-down Samoan trader whose nationality it would be hard to discover.

The *Star of Hope* had been simultaneously reported at islands three thousand miles apart; she had been tracked to the distant Marshall Islands, where all traces of her were lost. A week later she was reported to have renewed her activities in the New Hebrides, and although the *Whippet* had made an exhaustive search, the cruiser's efforts were in vain.

While awaiting further and possibly misleading information as to the whereabouts of the *Star of Hope*, the cruiser remained off Aihiou, to keep Christmas Day in the orthodox naval manner.

She was anchored within the lagoon on the north side of the island, Aihiou being nearly twenty miles in length and ten in breath, and surrounded by coral reefs. The island itself, being volcanic, was rugged; some of the peaks were over eight hundred feet in height, while there were three deep indentations forming secure harbours. Each of them had recently been explored by the boats of the *Whippet* without any trace of the elusive blackbirders.

Christmas Day in the Royal Navy is as gay and festive as the rules and regulations of the Service permit. If Jack is not as good or better than his master he assumes an air of joviality towards his officers that is only allowable during the Christmas festivities. Wintering within the Arctic Circle or sweltering in the Tropics, the British seaman must have his plum pudding and his holly.

On board the *Whippet* the crew "let themselves go." On the previous day they had been "piped down" in order to decorate the ship. Shore parties had gone and returned, laden with evergreens. Since real holly was not forthcoming, imitation had to do. Red kersey—obtained from a condemned tunic of one of the Marines—provided the berries, holly leaves were cunningly contrived by cutting down the evergreen brought from the island. The mess deck was a bower of foliage. Here and there were artistically designed mottoes, bearing messages of greeting to the captain and officers. The yeoman of signal's flag-locker was temporarily denuded to add to the brightness of the scene, while fore and aft the ship reeked with the odours of glorified plum-duff.

In the afternoon general leave was granted—a concession that was eagerly taken advantage of—and officers and men were quickly in the boats.

"Mr. Kennedy!" sang out the commander, who, by virtue of his position, had to remain on board.

"Sir?"

An alert young midshipman, dressed in the white tropical uniform, saluted.

"You have no definite plans for the afternoon?"

"No, sir; Mr. Munroe and I were just going for a jaunt."

"Would you mind giving Boy a run? I doubt whether he would follow anyone else but you."

The commander stooped and patted the muscular neck of a ferocious-looking bull terrier—his particular pet and the mascot of the ship's company.

"Very good, sir."

Victor Kennedy and Eric Munroe were midshipmen, lent from the flagship for duty in the *Whippet* during the operations against the blackbirding schooners. Their particular business was to take charge of the boats during the exploration of creeks and lagoons where the draught of the cruiser was too great to allow her to enter.

The midshipmen simply revelled in the work. It was infinitely better, in their estimation, than keeping watch on the flagship under the vigilant eye of that old martinet of an admiral, Sir Peter Garboard. All the same, they were glad of the opportunity to spend the afternoon of Christmas Day ashore of Aihiou Island.

"Come along, Boy," exclaimed Kennedy.

The bull terrier needed no second invitation. He had been enviously smelling the shore, as sea-dogs do. With a rush he made for the accommodation ladder, nearly capsizing the dignified paymaster, and gained the waiting boat.

"Don't go too far inland, Mr. Kennedy," cautioned the commander. "The natives are, of course, harmless and well disposed, but one is apt to get badly bushed in the scrub."

The midshipman saluted, turned and followed his chum.

A quarter of an hour later the two lads were walking briskly along the white sandy beach with Boy keeping obediently to heel. In spite of the heat they maintained a brisk pace, and soon a projection of the shore hid them from the cruiser.

"My word, it is warm," exclaimed Munroe, stooping to pick up a green coconut that had just fallen from a lofty palm and which had missed his head by a bare yard. "And a twelvemonth ago to-day we were skating on the great pond at Attercliffe."

"I'm quite content," rejoined his companion. "Personally, I don't care for cold, damp winters. Give me a hot—— here, Boy, come here, sir, instantly."

But Boy was off. He had spotted a number of pigs contently grubbing in a glade of the palm-grove. He was off like a stroke of greased lightning.

The midshipmen whistled and shouted, but all to no purpose. The dog was hard on the track of the porkers.

"We must follow him, I suppose," grumbled Kennedy. "The commander will be in a tear if we lose him."

"Carry on, then," was the brief reply of the fellow midshipman, and without further delay the two lads plunged into the undergrowth. Fainter and fainter grew the noise occasioned by Boy's undesirable attention to the porcine herd, but the tracks through the scrub were plainly discernible.

Half an hour later the lads came to an abrupt halt; further progress being barred by an impenetrable wall of formidable thorns.

"The brute!" gasped Munroe, wiping the perspiration from his brow. "He's done us."

"Can you hear anything?"

"No. That is, I think——"

"Well?"

"It may be my fancy, but I believe I hear the animal barking. Let's edge away to the right."

Another quarter of an hour passed. No sound disturbed the solitude of the coconut groves.

"Let's get back," suggested Kennedy. "Boy will find his way to the boat when he's finished his little game."

"Lead on, then," agreed Munroe, who was getting tired of this wild-goose chase after his superior officer's pet.

It was easier said than done. The midshipmen, stumbling along in single file, their faces and arms torn by the sharp spikes of the undergrowth, soon came to the conclusion that they had not picked up the tracks of their outward journey. The unpleasant fact came home to them: they were bushed.

"I wish I had brought a pocket compass!" said Munroe. "I believe we're going round and round in a big circle."

"If we could only get a glimpse of the sun occasionally we'd soon be all right," remarked his chum, "but these palm trees are as thick as tiles on a roof."

"Then let's keep on; we're bound to strike the coast somewhere. We might try a hail now and then."

For another two hours the lads pursued their

difficult way through an apparently endless forest. Then, temporarily dead-beat, they came to a halt.

"By Jove! I've forgotten I had a Christmas lunch," exclaimed Kennedy. "I begin to feel downright hungry."

"Try a coconut, then," suggested Munroe.

"Thanks, I'm not having any," was the reply, for the midshipman had already partaken freely of the sweet liquid that the green husks contained.

"Hello, what's that?"

"Voices," declared Munroe.

"Right this time. No, don't shout. It may be some of our men looking for us, or it may be natives. We'll carry on and see who they are."

Even then it was no easy matter to follow the direction of the sound, but at length the two jaded midshipmen found themselves on the edge of a clearing.

Here a strange sight met their gaze. About a dozen palm-leafed huts were placed in a semi-circle. On the open space thus formed were quite fifty men, women, and children squatting on the ground. The men were for the most part destitute of clothing beyond a loin-cloth of native grass. Their hair was fizzed up with grease into a turban-like formation. Many of the older men had their faces painted with ochre and chalk. As far as the midshipmen could see they were unarmed. The women were evidently in holiday attire, being bedecked with flowers and strings of bright-coloured shells.

A feast was in progress. The appetising odour of baked meats filled the air.

"Christmas Day in the bush," whispered Munroe. "What shall we do?"

Coming suddenly to the edge of a clearing, the midshipmen beheld a large party of natives seated before a row of palm-leaf huts.

"Get them to let us have a tuck-in, I vote," suggested Kennedy. "These fellows are harmless enough, the commander said so."

Munroe did not feel at all sure about it. The commander, it occurred to him, was not an absolute authority on all the manners and

customs of the various natives of the New Hebrides.

But Kennedy lacked his friend's sense of caution.

Before Munroe was quite aware of the fact, the midshipman grasped him by the arm and led him towards the gathering of natives.

At the sight of two white-clothed men advancing the villagers started to their feet, and having recovered from their astonishment, greeted them with a shout that betokened a hearty welcome. Quickly the lads were surrounded. A man, whose elaborate ornamentations proclaimed him to be a chief, grasped Kennedy by the shoulder, and gravely went through the ceremony of rubbing noses. This operation he proceeded to perform on the now self-possessed Munroe.

"What's going to happen next, old chap?" asked Kennedy, turning to his chum. "I suppose we must make signs."

So saying, he wriggled his jaw and pointed meaningly towards the food. The gestures were understood.

With a grin of delight the chief led the way to the festive board, which happened to be mother earth. He promptly squatted, and indicated that the midshipmen should take up their positions on either side.

Turning to one of his men, the chief gave an order. The native ran off, presently to return, bringing with him a battered case. From this the chief produced some knives and forks of antique pattern, possibly the gift of the captain of some passing ship to an ancestor of the midshipmen's host.

Having helped himself to a pair of these articles, the old native motioned that Kennedy and his companion should each provide himself with these relics of civilisation. Then, holding his knife and fork in his fists, with their ends resting on the ground and their points raised skywards, the chief gave another order.

Deftly a large ball of steaming clay was placed before him. One sharp blow broke the earthy covering, and behold! there was a perfectly roasted fowl, plucked clean, with its feathers adhering to the clay.

This was cut up and served on a broad leaf. One mouthful convinced Kennedy that fowls roasted in native fashion were delightful.

"*Cluck—cluck—cluck*—good!" he ejaculated, imitating the noise of a fowl and grinning appreciatively.

"*Cluck, cluck, cluck*—good!" repeated the chief, yet somehow he did not look at ease. The use of the knife and fork troubled him sorely.

"Our genial host is evidently in difficulties," observed Munroe. "Let's give him a friendly lead."

Laying aside their knives and forks the two midshipmen tackled their share with Nature's tools. Like a shot the chief threw his down also, and in ten seconds his lavish portion of fowl had vanished.

"Second course, roast pork—prime!" exclaimed Kennedy. "And I do like pork."

When half of his generous helping had disappeared, the midshipman noticed that his host was regarding him appreciatively, as if asking for the opinion of his white guests.

"What's the noise a pig makes, old man?" asked Kennedy.

"Grunting, you chump. Do a grunt as well as you can," replied Munroe.

Kennedy obeyed. He imitated a porker to perfection, at the same time nodding his head in approbation.

The chief's face bore a sad, reproving look. He shook his head.

"*Bow, wow, wow!*" he said, gravely.

"Good heavens, old chap!" gasped Kennedy, "they've been feeding us with roast dog. I do believe they've killed and eaten the commander's tike."

II

For the rest of that long-drawn meal the zest of life was extinguished in the breasts of the two young Englishmen. A Christmas dinner in which a dog—more than likely the commander's bull terrier, since there were no signs of any native animal of that description—figured largely, was enough to damp their spirits and destroy their sense of hunger. The appetising bread-fruits and yams, the luscious fruit, no longer appealed to them.

"Let's be getting under way," suggested Munroe. "We must get back to the ship before sunset."

"Easier said than done," declared Kennedy.

"Rot! I'll draw a figure representing a ship, and get old Fuzzywig to send a native to pilot us back."

"Not a bad idea, old man."

By the aid of the neglected knife Kennedy traced out a rough drawing of a ship. Since he felt certain that a sketch of the cruiser would complicate matters, his production represented a two-masted, fore-and-aft rigged craft. Tapping his companion and himself on the chest, the midshipman pointed to the sketch, then to one of the natives.

The chief nodded, spoke a few words to his man, and began to go through the nose-rubbing ceremony once more.

After that, the whole crowd of natives broke into a chorus and danced around their white guests who had honoured their feast by their presence.

"I wish they'd cut the show short," muttered Kennedy. "We'll be in an awful hole if we don't get back before sunset. I suppose it's bad manners to push off directly after grub—even if it's roast dog."

"Chuck it!" growled Munroe. "For goodness' sake don't keep harping on that. Poor old Boy! What will the commander say?"

"Anyhow we'll soon hear. These chaps have finished at last. Lead on, old coppernob."

This last exhortation was addressed to the native who had been selected to guide the white men to their "hut that floats upon the sea." The fellow set off, while the midshipmen, bestowing a final salutation upon their over-hospitable hosts, followed.

"I say, he's taking us the wrong way," declared Munroe. "We came into the clearing on that side."

"That's all right," said Kennedy, reassuringly. "He's got the hang of things a jolly sight better than we have. No doubt there's an easier path this way."

The midshipman was certainly right about the path, for the lads found themselves upon a fairly even track through the palm groves, sufficiently wide for them to walk abreast.

At the end of an hour's steady tramp Munroe's fears returned.

"We're miles out of our course," he exclaimed. "Why, I feel absolutely certain——"

His remark on the absolute certainties of life was cut short by a sudden rustling of the undergrowth. With a yell the native made a frantic grab at the trunk of a tree, and with the dexterity of a monkey swarmed up aloft. The next instant Boy, his white coat hardly discernible by reason of dirt and scratches, was jumping up at the two midshipmen.

"Hallo, Boy, old fellow!" exclaimed Kennedy, overjoyed. "We thought you were killed and eaten."

"Thank goodness he's not," added Munroe, fervently.

"But a dog's a dog for all that."

"Don't harp on it, old chap," protested Munroe with a gulp. "If only that tow-haired old cannibal hadn't given vent to that idiotic bow-bow. Here, come down, you black rascal. The dog won't hurt you."

The native did not seem so sure about it, especially since Boy, having greeted his temporary master, was growling at the trunk of the tree in which the man had taken refuge.

It was not until a leash, made up of the two midshipmen's handkerchiefs, had been slipped through the bull terrier's collar that the native could be persuaded to descend. Then, with his hands clasped tightly behind his back as if in momentary anticipation of a rear attack, he resumed his way.

At length the palm trees gave place to open country. The midshipmen found themselves on high ground facing south, whereas the *Whippet* they knew to be lying off the north side of the island. In the distance they could see the blue water of the Pacific, although the shore was hidden by the intervening land.

"We're miles adrift," said Munroe. "From what I remember of the chart of Aihiou, it's quite twenty-five miles from north to south by the coast."

"Cheer up, we're out of the wood. If it comes to the worst we can find our way round by the shore in the dark. Besides, it will be a starlight night. Let's send the native back."

But the guide strenuously objected to be dismissed. Evidently his chief's instructions were to take the two white men to within sight of the ship, and the chief's word was law.

"All right, then; have your own way," said Kennedy, and the native, understanding by the gesture rather than by the tone of his voice, gave a self-satisfied smile.

Two hundred yards farther he came to an abrupt halt, and pointed over the edge of a steep declivity.

The midshipmen gave an exclamation of surprise. Beneath, there was a broad sheltered creek, and in it, like an object lying upon a mirror, was a long, rakish-looking schooner flying the mercantile flag of Germany. Both lads recognised the vessel at a glance: she was the blackbirders' craft—the *Star of Hope*.

III

BEFORE Kennedy and his chum had recovered from their astonishment, the native had taken to his heels. Having accomplished his mission he was most anxious to reach his village ere darkness set in, for, like most of the South Sea Islanders, he had a superstitious terror of night.

"Now what's to be done?" asked Munroe.

"Wait and see," replied his companion, oracularly. "We're in luck."

"I don't see how."

"You will if we sit tight. Our people are bound to look for us if we don't turn up. They'll be armed, you can take my word for it. When they find us they can easily trap that craft."

"Perhaps," said Munroe, doubtfully. "But what possessed that native to bring us here?"

Before the terrified German could pull himself up, the bull terrier leaped forward and seized him in a ferocious grip.

"Our fault. We drew a picture of a two-masted craft. Evidently he thought we belonged to that customer. More, it is a moral cert that the blackbirders haven't begun operations yet, otherwise our reception at the chief's Christmas dinner wouldn't have been so genial."

"Righto! Let's make ourselves comfortable. If those fellows spot our white ducks the cat will be out of the bag."

Accordingly, the two midshipmen threw themselves down on the ground by the side of a convenient bush, and having taken steps to prevent Boy betraying their presence, they kept the blackbirding schooner under observation.

Apparently the crew of the *Star of Hope* anticipated no danger, for her awnings were spread and her longboat had been hoisted out and was made fast alongside.

For quite a long time the lads waited without noticing any signs of life on board, but about an hour before sunset signs of activity manifested themselves.

A swarm of brown-skinned men—the Malays who formed the bulk of her crew—manned the longboat. They were armed with rifles, and, in addition, carried the creese or crooked razor-bladed knife in their shawls. Accompanied by two men in European clothing, they cast off and rowed for the shore.

"Hadn't we better hook it?" suggested Munroe.

"Not much. They won't land within a couple of hundred yards of us. I say, old chap, they're going to raid the village where we had our Christmas dinner. Their little game is to make a descent upon it as soon as it gets dark."

"Can't we stop them?"

"Don't see how."

Kennedy knitted his brows in perplexity.

"We must wait and see," he remarked.

They watched the blackbirders crew land and form up, leaving one fellow as boat-keeper. Then the rather unpleasant fact became apparent that the raiders were coming in their direction, and would doubtless take the path by means of which the midshipmen had gained the shore.

"Boy!" ejaculated Munroe apprehensively.

"We'll muzzle him. Come here, old fellow."

The bull terrier, with an obedience that had hitherto been sadly deficient, came within reach of Kennedy's grasp. With one hand gripping the animal's collar, and the other held tightly and firmly round his muzzle, the lad kept him in comparative submission.

Once or twice the bull terrier gave vent to a smothered growl and tugged furiously at the restraining grasp, but, to the midshipmen's great relief, the raiders passed by within fifty yards of their place of concealment and disappeared in the palm-groves.

"Look here, old man," exclaimed Kennedy. "Suppose we try to collar that schooner."

Munroe glanced at his companion, thinking, perhaps, that he was jesting; but that glance was sufficient to show him that Kennedy was in deadly earnest.

"I'm game," replied Munroe, calmly. "What's the programme?"

"The schooner's practically deserted. I believe I can see one fellow lolling about on deck. All we have to do is to surprise the boat-keeper and capture the boat. He doesn't seem very alert."

Holding Boy by the improvised leash, the midshipmen crept cautiously down the incline, taking cover behind the numerous small bushes that abounded. Without detection they came within ten yards of the sandy shore, where the Malay, smoking a huge cheroot, was sitting. The muzzle of his rifle was visible above the gunwale of the boat, but he carried an ugly-looking creese.

"Now!" whispered Kennedy.

The two chums started to their feet and raced towards the Malay. The fellow, startled out of his wits at the sight of the naval uniforms, took to his heels and disappeared into the bush, without stopping to give the alarm to the people in the schooner.

"Good!" ejaculated Kennedy, picking up the rifle. The weapon was an antiquated Mauser, bolt action, but without a magazine. Opening the breach the midshipmen found that the rifle was loaded, but only one cartridge was at their disposal. The fugitive boat-keeper had made off with the rest of his ammunition.

"Why didn't you slip Boy?" asked Munroe.

"No need. The fellow was terrified enough. Luckily Boy didn't bark. Now let's push the boat off."

It was no easy matter. Her forefoot was deep in the soft sand, and it was not until the lads had made use of gratings and oars that they were able to slide her into the water.

"I'll row," said Kennedy. "You steer and keep Boy under control. With a bit of luck we may get alongside without being discovered."

A few strokes brought the heavy boat in sight of the schooner, which had hitherto been invisible from the beach by reason of a clump of coco-palms growing almost at the water's edge.

With hardly a sound Kennedy pursued his task. Nearer and nearer loomed the schooner, now in the shadows cast by the setting sun behind the palm groves. Unchallenged, the unwieldy craft ran alongside the rope-ladder hanging from the blackbirders' gangway.

"Now," whispered Kennedy, grasping the rifle in his left hand and one of the main-ropes with the other.

With an agile movement he gained the deck. Boy was pushed up after him, and Munroe was a good third.

The schooner's deck was deserted, save for a flabby, heavily built man who was reclining on a deck chair and puffing at a huge pipe. His meditations were rudely cut short by the appearance of the two midshipmen.

Like the boat-keeper his courage oozed out of his boots at the sight of the young officers' uniforms, but finding that the two lads were unsupported by any British seamen, he jumped up.

"Vot you vant?" he demanded. "Dis Zherman sheep."

"Surrender in the King's name!" ordered Kennedy.

For answer the German took shelter behind the mainmast and shouted an order.

From the companion leading to the forepeak appeared the hideous head of a Malay. For a moment he paused, then skipped on deck, at the same time whipping out his creese. He was followed by another and yet another.

Raising the captured rifle, Kennedy fired. The foremost Malay dropped, shot in the ribs, while the bullet smashed the arm of the fellow behind him.

Undeterred by the fate of their comrades, four more copper-coloured villains emerged from the forepeak, while the German, encouraged by the way things were shaping, forsook his place of refuge.

"Fetch 'em, Boy," exclaimed Kennedy, at the same time covering the blackbirders with his empty rifle.

Like a flash the bull terrier was in the thick of the Malay press. One fellow alone attempted to use his creese. Down he went with Boy at his throat. Two others, unable to stand up to this unusual mode of attack, promptly jumped overboard. The rest retreated into the forepeak.

"Secure that hatch, Munroe!" shouted Kennedy, still keeping the German under observation. "That's all serene. Now bring Boy along."

To this Boy objected. He would not let go his tenacious grip until the luckless Malay became unconscious.

The terrified German, seeing Munroe approach with the dog, suddenly made a rush for the main chains. Before he could swing himself into the rigging Boy had him by the seat of his trousers. The wretched man, grasping the ratlines with both hands, was swinging in the air, with the bull terrier fixed on to him like a limpet.

"Me surrender!" he howled.

The midshipmen could hardly refrain from laughing, and felt inclined to prolong the spectacle; but at length Kennedy seized the animal by the collar and tugged. Something had to go. There was an ominous rending of cloth, and Boy fell upon the deck with half a yard of canvas trousers still gripped in his powerful jaws.

"What is the signal of recall?" demanded Kennedy, when the German had been secured.

"Vot you mean?"

"The signal to bring your men back."

"I no say."

The midshipman pointed meaningly to the dog, who was still growling at his late victim.

The German's face grew livid.

"*Nein, nein!*" he exclaimed. "No more dog. I speak. Load der gun twice."

He pointed to an iron muzzle-loading gun just abaft the mainmast.

"Where's the powder?" demanded Kennedy.

The captive indicated the after cabin. Leaving Munroe on guard Kennedy went below, presently to return with another rifle, some cartridges, and a small keg of black powder.

"We must get those blackbirders back," he announced, in answer to Munroe's look of inquiry. "It would never do to let them raid the natives who gave us our Christmas dinner. They can't get off to the schooner without a boat, and by that time we'll be able to make sail."

"They might swim," suggested the cautious Munroe.

"Then let 'em. There are plenty of sharks about."

Having loaded the antiquated cannon, the midshipman broke out the bullet of a cartridge, and discharged the gun by the simple expedient of firing the blank cartridge into the touch-hole. The quietude of Aihiou was disturbed by a terrific detonation. Twice the operation was repeated.

"Hurrah! Here's the land-breeze. Foresail and fore stay-sail will do the trick."

It was hard work setting even that scanty canvas, but by dint of leading the halyards to a windlass the required sail was set.

The *Star of Hope* was held by one anchor only. The cable of this was slipped and the schooner gathered way, Kennedy having taken the precaution of cutting the lashing of the catted anchor so as to have it ready for instant use.

Night had now fallen, but, as the midshipman had predicted, the starlight made the navigation within the lagoon an easy matter.

About an hour before dawn came a hail.

"Ship ahoy! What ship is that?" and one of the cruiser's boats ran alongside the slowly moving vessel.

"Schooner *Star of Hope*, prize to H.M.S. *Whippet*," replied Kennedy, proudly.

"By Jove! It's those rascally midshipmen," exclaimed the lieutenant in charge of the boat. "You've got hold of a fine Christmas-box for us, you fellows."

"And we have had our Christmas dinner," added Munroe.

The lieutenant's rejoinder, though haphazard, was strangely appropriate.

"Lucky dog!" said he.

IN THE SCRUM—AND OUT.

BY E. H. D. SEWELL.

(Third Article)

MY first two articles have dealt with the groundwork of the game of Rugby Football and the forward game. I propose to complete the series with the back game and tactics generally. Since I wrote those articles the importance of tactics on a sterner field has been illustrated in daily profusion, and, knowing that every one of my young readers has saturated himself with descriptions of the deathless deeds of the Allies' gallant armies, I need not apologise for the appearance of anything in the nature of military metaphor that follows. Time and again the present war of extermination of a hitherto unsuspected race of Huns, headed by Attila II., has shown us what a fine training ground the Rugby Football field is for war, and before it is all over the value of strategy and tactics will again and again be demonstrated. It seems superfluous to point out, too, how very much to the front Rugger men are, and have been, in this "little affair" of ours.

If the forwards are the artillery of a Rugger force the backs are the cavalry and infantry. No fifteen of any consequence can be defeated by another whose forwards are anything but good, so that on what follows I am assuming that our pack of eight is just about as good as its opposing set of forwards. This being so we will deal with our half-backs first. The scrum-half should be exceedingly nimble and sturdy. Lack of sturdiness can be atoned for by extreme agility, but nothing, in a scrum-half, can compensate for lack of agility. If, therefore, your chosen scrum-half has not the human equivalent for the nimbleness of the domestic cat, remove him to some other sphere such as the scrum or full-back or wing three, possibly even the touch-judge's flag, but don't let him continue to mar your fun by occupying a position for which he is physically unsuited. No scrum-half who lacked genuine agility of foot, body, hands, and, in fact, everything, has ever left a mark on the pages of Rugger. Some who were short of sturdiness have done big things in that position, but only thanks to their agility worked by a football brain. Strictly speaking, the cleverest boy in the fifteen ought to be the scrum-half, for it is from this position that the *real* attack is initiated. Whereas a really brainy scrum-half can "make" a moderate line of three-quarters, it is certain that a fool scrum-half can reduce a good three-quarter line to comparative impotence. The scrum-half is, therefore, in much the same position as the wicket-keeper in cricket. He manages to secure all the kicks and very few of the ha'pence. When Jones, your left wing, scores a great try, you give as little credit to the scrum-half whose clever play at *the very beginning* of the scoring movement left the opposition at least "one short" on Jones's wing, just as, after your school eleven has beaten your chief school rival by thirty-five runs in a soft-wicket match, the fact escapes you that your wicket-keeper caught their best bat (off a ball between the leg stump and his body) before he had settled down. It has always been so, and wicket-keepers, with their bashed fingers, and scrum-halves, with their bruised bodies, must like or lump it, for it is their fate.

THE FIRST DUTY OF A SCRUM-HALF

is to learn how to put the ball fairly in the scrum. There is only one way to do this, and that is the way his conscience directs him to do it. If he has no conscience—I have seen scrum-halves of at least two nationalities without one—he ought to be anything but scrum-half.

The ball once fairly in the scrum, he must watch it more closely than a cat does the chink in the wainscoting. He must, directly his forwards "get it," proceed to control the

game by giving the necessary orders (when his side is playing to their backs), and if the opposing forwards "get it," he must advise his own forwards as to direction and its whereabouts generally. His remarks must be made loud enough for his forwards to hear, but excessive vociferation is to be deprecated. It leads to a player becoming a "talker" and not a "doer," as in one recent rather notorious instance. If his fifteen is bent on a forward game, the ball, once his forwards have "got it," is their own special concern and it is, in a general way, quite unnecessary for the scrum-half to publish its whereabouts for the benefit of the enemy. This is where the utility of the task of a Censor comes in to make Rugger like real War!

If the opposing eight gets the ball the scrum-half must do all in his power, legitimately, to prevent the opposing scrum-half doing with it what *he* wants to do. In fact, until the ball has been passed by the opposing scrum-half, it is your scrum-half's job to be always *in its immediate vicinity*. He, of all the players, has no rest, no breathing space, until the game is over

THE OUTSIDE HALF.

Next to him, in importance, comes the stand-off—or outside or fly—half-back. Some hold that in this player should be the brains of the back division. Well, Rugger is no game for a fool in any position, but, for my ideal fifteen, I want the scrum-half to be cleverer than his partner. The scrum-half generally has to extricate himself from difficulties before he begins to play the game prescribed for the moment, or dictated by his football instinct. His partner more often than not is in the open when he gets the ball, and so has no initial difficulties to dispose of first. Others confront him, it is true, but so they do the scrum-half. The outside half gets a fair and reasonable—almost a flying—start, by comparison with the task which confronts his busier partner.

Howbeit, a very great deal depends on the ability of the outside-half. In attack, he must scent out the line of least resistance and make for it. In defence, his is a harder job than that of the scrum-half, because the attack is under way by the time it reaches him, whereas in the scrum-half's case it has not begun really to move. Both have a great deal of "stopping"—of man or of ball—to do, and their job requires the greatest pluck and sturdiness needed of any members of a fifteen. Both must be very clever short kicks, and especially masters of the punt in all its aspects. It is a good thing for a fifteen when both its scrum and stand-off half are very bad drop-kicks! That is, unless its three-quarter line is useless. Drop-kicking is not the chief part in the game of a half. Critics of this statement will, of course, blandly inquire whether I have never heard of R. A. Lloyd, or J. C. M. Lewis, or B. S. Cumberlege. In my humble estimation all three are centre three-quarters and not half-backs at all. Their drop-kicking ability is the weak spot in their respective games, and a source of danger to their teams, which annually lose points, on balance, because these three can drop-kick so well! The punting of a P. Munro or an A. D. Stoop is the ideal to be aimed at. These can punt, within feet, to a given spot, and such ability is priceless in a half-back, scrum, or stand-off.

MAKING OPENINGS FOR THE THREE-QUARTER.

Nothing but constant practice can teach an outside-half the way to make openings for his three-quarters. This is his chief *raison d'être*. If he does not try for openings first and foremost and all through the piece, he will never be first-class. He may have the hands of a F. H. Knott and the feet of a R. A. Lloyd, but unless he persistently attempts to break through *before parting with the ball* he will never be a class player. For attempting to do so, and *failing more than once*, he will be heartily abused in the Press (when he begins to play in big football), but if he reads the papers he can console himself with the thought that those who criticise him adversely don't know the game of Rugby football, and therefore ought not to be allowed to worry those who do with their ignorant views of the game. It is as necessary for an outside-half to attempt repeatedly to break through the opposing line of three-quarters *before passing* as it is for a batsman to wield a straight blade, for a rifleman to hold his firearm straight and steady before *pressing* the trigger; for a horseman to be able to ride with his knees, regardless of reins; and for a gentleman to keep his word. By dint of constant practice the outside half will get into the habit of finding out the line of least resistance—this is a habit, just as much as run-getting at cricket—and it will come naturally to him to make for that point. By various ways, such as dodging off first one foot and then the

other, and by pretending to pass the ball, he will get past the first opponent and then find himself going *ventre à terre* towards the full-back supported by one of his centres, or a wing-forward, or his scrum-half.

Then comes one of the most difficult things in the game—the giving of an easy pass at the right moment. Here, again, there is only one way, and that is acquired only by incessant practice. It is a difficult thing to acquire, though it looks and seems easy. A good fieldsman, or taker of the ball, is not necessarily a good giver of it. In such a case as I have quoted the giver *must* use both hands. He must pass back towards his own line and get in front of the man to whom he is passing. Many a final pass goes wrong entirely because of the would-be taker's fault. The taker often runs level with the man who has the ball, instead of *about three yards* behind him as he should. Thus, the giver *must* throw forward when it comes to the moment to pass, simply because if he threw *at* the would-be taker the ball would fall behind him. It is therefore absolutely necessary for *every* member of a fifteen to

PRACTISE PASSING-RUNS UP AND DOWN THE FIELD

before the match begins, and not only for the three-quarters and halves to do so. Even the full-back should join in these all too inadequate practices.

As to the best way to give such a pass, each must decide for himself. Some swing the body as well as the arms, others get rid of the ball by a kind of flick from the wrist. H. H. Vassall (Bedford, Oxford Union, and England) was the best passer of a Rugby football I ever saw. He never swung the body but passed from an elbow action. The best passer playing last season was D. J. de Villiers (South Africa and Cambridge University). He passes from his wrists. The Vassall or de Villiers method I hold to be better than that of A. D. Stoop, who swings his body from the hips and gets in, in consequence, one accurate pass to at least three by Vassall or de Villiers. Further, the wrist or elbow pass does not compel a certain slowing up to pass, which I have frequently detected in Stoop's game, and which is all against success.

CENTRE THREE-QUARTER

is the next position to be considered. Here we must have weight and pace to go with courage and good kicking and fielding ability. There must be weight and courage to stop forward rushes, and to be able to withstand the almost standing tackle. By "almost standing" I mean that when opposing backs are attacking a centre often finds himself scarcely on the move with an opponent in full stride before him. This is where a frail centre is overrun. He is simply "barged" aside as if he didn't exist. A running tackle is quite a different matter.

There must be pace to enable a centre to run fast enough to get his own wing properly going before giving him the ball, and *then* for him to be able to keep up with that wing to be handy for the return pass, or to give him sufficient moral support to prevent the opposing full-back from giving the wing his (the full-back's) undivided attention. This is a most important point for boy centres to remember. They are so apt to think that having passed the ball successfully to the wing their (the centre's) interest in the plan of attack thereupon ceases automatically. This is all wrong.

THE CENTRE MUST FOLLOW HIS WING

as near as he can *until the wing has scored the try*. The centre does not know that his wing may not stumble and the ball go loose. Further, his mere presence helps to put the full-back off his sole duty, which is, to go for the man with the ball. There may be no chance whatever of the wing giving the repass to his centre, but that does not matter in the least—the centre's duty is to be there.

The wing's chief duty is to tuck the ball under the arm nearest the touch-line and *go for the line*. We see far too much finessing (?) on the part of modern wings to give the return pass to the centre. *If the defence knows its job* the return pass *never* succeeds. Remember that well. If the wing is really fast and *goes resolutely for the line*, ever so many more tries will be scored per season than by humbugging about with return-pass tactics.

COUNTLESS TRIES ARE ANNUALLY THROWN AWAY

by wings who lose them in the act of looking round for their centre, or someone else to pass to. Return-pass tactics, *except as a last despairing resource*, constitute rank bad Rugby football—and that is all there is to it.

Where wing and centre are a settled pair,

there is no excuse, in a school fifteen, for bad passing and bad handling. Every spare moment should be utilised by them in passing runs, the value of which will be much enhanced if they get a friend to "be full-back" in order to try to stop their passing. There need be no tackling.

Three-quarters as a rule (and outside-halves are not guiltless in this respect!) pay a great deal too much attention to the touch-line. Instead of using their wits, their feet for running and dodging, and their hands for feinting to pass and for passing, they are too ready on most occasions to kick into touch. The touch-line should be a last instead of a first resource. The game is not won by the greater number or accuracy of the kicks into touch. Happily, these do not score points. Many games are

LOST BY TOO MUCH KICKING INTO TOUCH.

Especially is this practice to be deprecated when a side is several points down. Such a side has everything to lose by *not keeping the ball alive, i.e.*, in play. What is the use of a ball that is being retrieved from the next field by some very small and indifferent kicker when you are ten points behind and there remain but ten minutes to play? You who see the precious moments fleeing quickly don't know which you would like to kick the harder—the member of your team who punted out of play, or the small volunteer who can't do more than his best, although that best generally sends the ball at right angles to the desired direction. Kicking to touch is overdone even in international matches by the team that is a try ahead in a tight game. It is more often the refuge of the funk and the brainless than of the clever player who goes all out for the line. Take your choice, my reader, among which type of player you would prefer to be numbered.

THREE RULES FOR THE FULL BACK.

A full back must be a sure field and a sure kick with *either* foot. His game must be guided by three golden rules: (i.) Never wait for the bounce—always try to catch the ball; (ii.) Always find touch with your punt; (iii.) Always go for the man with the ball—don't *look* at him but *crash!* at him. No change in the methods of play, in formation of players, in tactics, or in anything else connected with Rugger can alter these cardinal rules. By whether or not a player obeys them during play shall we judge whether he *is* a full back, or an imitation of one.

Full-backs also are a little prone to succumb to the temptations of the general custom of kicking into touch on all occasions. They do so frequently when the right game is for them to use their pace and to set their three-quarters going—in other words, to keep the game *alive*. Captains of school fifteens should watch well, in order to prevent their full backs from wasting the precious moments by indulging in long kicks that may bring down the house but which don't win matches.

But, when all is said and done, the secret of all success in Rugger is clever combination. Of what use is your 10¾ths wing if you don't let him have the ball? Of what use is your good pack of forwards if your backs, by playing the wrong game and by weak tackling, run those forwards to a standstill? Attack the enemy and keep on attacking him—not singly and in detachments, but all together; all three arms: horse, foot, and guns—guns, foot, and horse; get him on the run; having got him there, *keep* him there; give him no breathing space. By these means, and these alone, can you hope for victory.

WHO CARES?

A Public School Story

By HYLTON CLEAVER

Illustrated by H. M. Brock, R.I.

SYNOPSIS OF OPENING INSTALMENTS

JAMES ROSCOE enters Harley School, and is assigned to Godwin's house. He is a surly youth, ill-mannered, and entirely devoid of public spirit. He is made the joint fag of Symington and Menzies, the latter of whom incites him to steal chocolate from the village sweet-shop.

For this mean theft Roscoe receives a thrashing from Laing, the school captain, whom the head master has just transferred to Godwin's house, hitherto the most badly managed in the school.

Mr. Godwin objects to prefects in his house using the cane, and is angered to find that Laing intends to avail himself of the school rule which permits him to do so. Laing is of small stature, with wise-looking features, and throughout the school has a great reputation for sagacity. Though not an athlete himself, he determines that Godwin's shall make a better display in the house football matches than hitherto, and he is helped in this aim by Usherwood, a boy in the second school fifteen.

Usherwood, however, is a rather unruly spirit, and, excited by the prospect of gaining his first colours, he fixes on Mr. Godwin as the victim of his next practical joke.

CHAPTER XI—(*Continued*)

THE ART OF USHERWOOD

THERE are periods at every school during which there is a sudden demand for the commodity known as electric snuff. People suddenly remember its beauties, and write off for a consignment. The previous week a friend of Usherwood's in another house had purchased a supply of this snuff, and Usherwood obtained a small quantity from him. With this and some glue he was ready for "prep."

Mr. Godwin was a master whom everybody ragged. He was considered great sport. Whereas, however, some merely succeeded in securing lines in return, others, and notably Usherwood, could generally contrive to get him really excited and amusing. The uncertainty of the line events would take, generally gave to the ragging of Mr. Godwin a certain atmosphere of tense anticipation which made him a star turn.

It was Mr. Godwin's usual custom when the time came for prep. to come into the common room with his books and papers, deposit them on his desk, take out his inkpot and pens, and, having called the roll, disappear for some minutes. Nobody was quite certain of the manner in which he occupied those minutes; but rumour had it that he was accustomed to repair to the dining-room and finish up other people's remnants from the supper just concluded, which his dignity had previously prevented him from doing.

This evening, Usherwood rose as soon as Mr. Godwin, having finished the roll-call, had retired, and advancing to the master's dais with a white envelope in his hand, scattered electric snuff lightly over the papers on the desk. He then poured the contents of a small bottle of glue into the red ink pot, stuck the pen into it, and resumed his seat, where he was industriously working when Mr. Godwin returned and went to his dais.

The class sat tense with interest as he moved his papers, bent forward and blew softly at the slight dust that appeared to have settled on them.

It was fatal.

The class could not see the snuff as it rose, but the irritating effect thereof was evidenced by the fact that Mr. Godwin at once started work as a nasal gatling gun. It is not easy to imitate this gun through the nose and when a man

does so, it is not usually from choice. This being so he cannot, of course, stop just because he feels that he has been at it long enough, and that the audience would now like to hear him mimic a canary with a harelip.

Mr. Godwin kept on. For a time he just stood behind his desk and shook like a scarecrow in a gale, his head moving backwards and fo wards as if he were a mechanical toy "causing great amusement—roars-of-laughter-a-penny." As he warmed to his work, he sneezed faster and faster, more violently at every effort. Tears streamed from his eyes, whils: his complexion adopted the disguise of a much-used painter's palette. The class laughed as heartily as a class will when the man in charge can neither see nor hear them. Mr. Godwin strove to shout lines indiscriminately, to keep up appearances. He sank into his chair, handkerchief to his face, and sneezed as if making up for the lost sneezes of a lifetime. The scheme had been successful almost beyond expectations. At last he became weaker; he lay back, still sneezing, but with less life than before. Then his head fell forward on to his chest, and he merely made stupid snuffling noises, like a dog. Throughout his diverting performance, Usherwood had sat, stoically endeavouring to control his own laughter. His expression was grave, his eyes thoughtful, his humorous mouth depicting something of the self-satisfaction of a successful stage-manager.

Mr. Godwin lay back in his chair and fondled his face with a damp handkerchief. Occasionally he gave a spasmodic jerk forward and spluttered helplessly through his nose. If there is anything in private life more killing than a boat race or a strenuous tug-of-war, the palm goes to a bad attack of sneezing.

At last he sat forward, blotchy faced and watery eyed. He was not fool enough to mistake the cause of his discomfort. Any master who has grown grey at his job can tell you something about electric snuff.

He peered owlishly at the desks.

"Unless," said he, weakly, "the boy who is responsible for that disgraceful and cowardly trick stands up at once, the whole class will be kept in next Saturday afternoon and will, in addition, do me two hundred lines each."

Usherwood knew his man. He stood up.

"I am afraid, sir," said he, "that I must have dropped some snuff on your desk when last I was there."

Mr. Godwin squinted at him savagely, his moustache twitching.

"Six hundred lines," said he.

Usherwood sat down. He cared very little for lines. Mr. Godwin never caned, and as the semi-official ragger of the house, Usherwood could always depend upon assistance from his colleagues in line-writing.

Mr. Godwin drew towards him the book which he fondly hoped inspired awe into all his boys. It was a thin black register of punishments. He reached out for his pen. Now the beauty of a safety inkpot lies in its humour in being about the most unsafe thing in a stores' catalogue. Mr. Godwin took hold of his pen, and finding that it held, tugged at it, the inkpot toppled over, the inner part fell out, and a thick red river of ink coursed over his desk. He leapt to his feet, seized blotting paper, called for more. Chaos ensued. Boys fairly hugged themselves with delight. Usherwood watched thoughtfully. When at length order had been restored, Mr. Godwin sat forward on his chair, hands folded, elbows resting on his desk. He gazed angrily at the ruin on his desk, then he again called upon Usherwood.

"Yes, sir?," said Usherwood.

"Look at my desk!"

"Yes, sir. I'm sorry to see your desk like that."

"Yes. Are you also responsible for it?"

"I am afraid, sir," said Usherwood, bravely, "that I am."

Mr. Godwin nodded his head.

"I had intended to speak to you after preparation. A new boy has been to me and complained of having been thrown into a cold bath whilst suffering from nasal catarrh. Your name has been mentioned as ringleader of the bullies responsible. I shall now take other steps. I shall see the head master about you. This has gone too far."

There were certain occasions in Mr. Godwin's career at Harley when he was almost wise—when he did not lose his head and shriek hysterical rebukes at one and all. They were very, very rare. This was one of them, and Usherwood was a little taken aback. He had expected a torrent of abuse. Such terrible calmness had not been on the programme. Somewhere there was a hitch.

CHAPTER XII

"UP AGAINST IT"

ON the evening of the day following Usherwood's exhibition of the joy of life, Laing sat by the fire in his study, a book open on his knees, thinking. Weldon

had promised to come in for a "pow-wow" that evening, and he was expecting him every minute. In the meantime he was striving to get that grip of himself that strong characters learn to apply. There are times with all men when the desire to drift seems especially alluring, when they forget their motives, plans, hopes, and expressed opinions, and long for a moment to fall into line with the rest. Then do they brace themselves for the trial and get that grip. Laing was feeling for it, when Weldon came in.

"In reply to your kind inquiry," said he without delay, "my cold is a trifle easier, thank you."

"Sit down," said Laing.

"Thank you, again," said Weldon, courteously.

"I've just come across a yarn about Hood, the poet, in this book," said Laing, soberly.

"Yes?"

"Seems to have been a cheerful sort of cove."

"Look here," said Weldon. "Is this going to be a sort of polite tea-party, or what? I mean, I know what you are in this mood. I believe when you're home in the holidays, neighbours who feel bored get you to come in and make pithy observations, and then they write 'em down and all the next term they debate on what the dickens you meant, like they do over Browning. You'll start quoting Stevenson on Life presently."

"I'm glad *you're* genially inclined, anyway," said Laing.

"I? Oh, I'm all right. I've just been down the village with six footer men, and they keep you pretty tuned-up, you know."

"H'm," said Laing, drily. "Sorry I'm not a six-footer man myself."

Weldon regarded him severely.

"What," said he, "is this anecdote about Hood that's worrying you?"

Laing turned back a few pages in his book.

"It seems," said he, "that at one time he was awfully poor and all that, and lived in a garret where it was devilish cold in the winter. He used to have one meal a day—a chop, and to get warm he used to go up into his garret and heave this chop out of the window and then whiz downstairs as fast as he could move and get the thing back before a dog collared it."

"Great Scott," said Weldon, "what an awful ass!"

"I dunno," said Laing. "He made the best of things, anyway."

"Did I ever tell you," said Weldon, "about the man I knew who'd got a hammer toe? He was darned poor, too, and so when he got hungry he used to wriggle his toe against the sole of his boot and make a noise like a breakfast gong. Then he went out and got an appetite for the *next* meal."

Laing got up, laughing.

"You *are* an ass," said he.

"Not at all," said Weldon. "You hadn't heard my yarn. I hadn't heard yours. Sociability in the study—what!"

"Then you *ought* to have heard mine," said Laing. "It's classical. You don't seem quite so well read as I should like to find you Weldon."

"I'm not red at all."

"Green, p'raps," said Laing, cynically.

"Look here, what's the matter? You seem to have gone off your head. I know—I suppose you think you're going to win the footer shield. By the bye, that's a useful man you've got, that chap Usherwood. He won't get his cap *this* year, but you'll find him a handy forward in a house match."

"That," said Laing, "is just it."

"Just what?"

"There's been a frightful row. Usherwood's been having one of his ragging attacks. He baited Godwin no end. Godwin got sick and went to the Head."

"Well?"

"The Head didn't send for me at all. I think he might have done. Godwin's just told me the verdict. It seems he told the Old Man that Usherwood was the worst man in the house, drove him mad, incorrigible and all that. Wanted him sacked."

"They're not going to sling him out, surely?"

Laing spoke sadly.

"No," said he. "The Head's going to have him in the School House. He's going to shift over to-morrow."

There was dead silence. A coal fell from the fire into the grate. Laing lifted it back with the tongs.

"Hard luck on your footer," said Weldon, at last.

"It's sickening," said Laing, quietly. "I depended altogether on that man to give the house a show up for the shield. It's a frightful smack in the eye for me. There's nobody else."

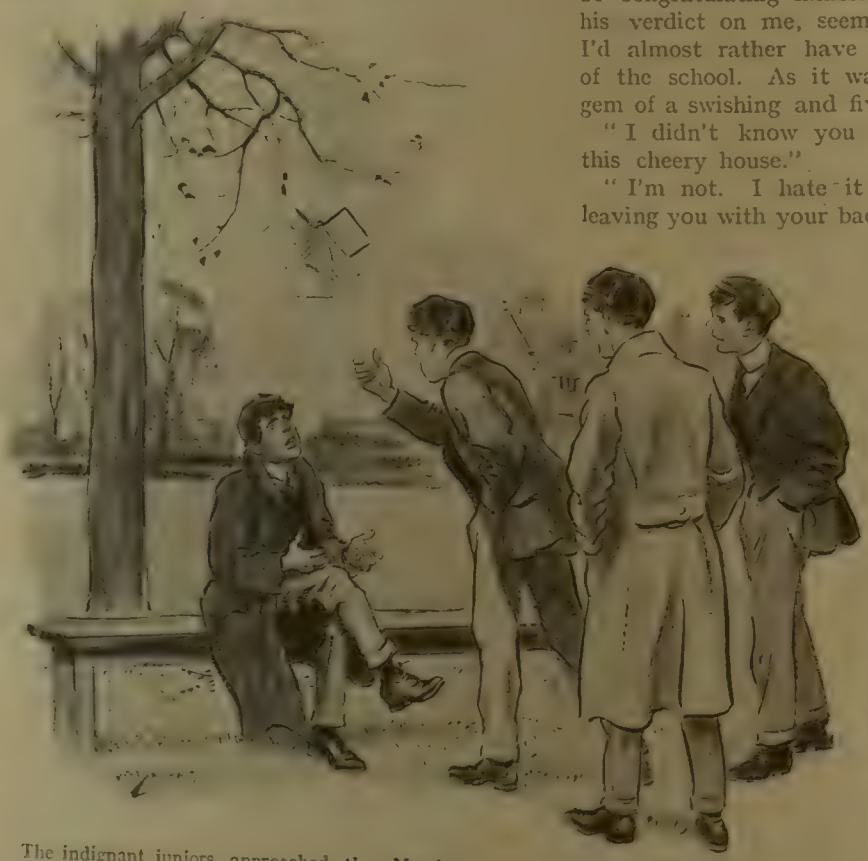
Weldon shifted his feet awkwardly. He did not quite know what to say. He had seldom seen Laing so obviously thrown out of his stride.

"I suppose," he said, sympathetically, "you'll scratch?"

Then suddenly Laing felt the grip that he had been searching for all the evening. Something inside him seemed to grow suddenly taut. He laughed.

"Rather not," said he. "Morrison'll skipper the side, that's all. These sort of set-backs are all in the game."

Usherwood visited Laing that evening. For years past he had longed for a change of houses.



The indignant juniors approached, then Marriott stepped forward and knocked Roscoe's book into the air.

It was ironical that when at last his luck changed and his transfer came, he wanted it at that hour rather less than anything else in the world. He saw now that he was deserting, realised that Laing, in his coaching of the house, had depended upon him as the cornerstone of the shield team. It seemed to him to be like watching a policeman facing a hostile crowd for a while, and then calmly moving away just when they were beginning to use their belts. All his spirit revolted at the turn events had taken. It was his own fault. He had been thoughtless, inconsiderate, fat-headed.

Laing received him with a sober smile.

"Come to say good-bye?" said he.

"I s'pose," said Usherwood, "it's no earthly good saying I'm sorry. P'raps you wouldn't believe me?"

"Oh, yes, I would," said Laing. "I'm sorry myself."

"I know. I feel an infernal cad. I can't do anything either. I've seen the Head, and I'm afraid I protested too loudly. He seemed to be congratulating himself on the effect of his verdict on me, seemed glad it hurt. I'd almost rather have been booted out of the school. As it was he gave me a gem of a swishing and five hundred lines."

"I didn't know you were so fond of this cheery house."

"I'm not. I hate it like poison. It's leaving you with your back to the wall that makes me feel a skunk."

"That's all right. You're one of the lucky ones. But I count myself pretty lucky too. Nobody wants a walk-over when he's wound up for a scrap. The harder the job the better the work put in; the fewer men the greater share of glory, and all that. I shall enjoy it. Don't you worry yourself grey. Just you talk about the house as if it were the coming sensation in stars. Get men interested. Don't let it be run down. As an outsider you can do us no end of good in the advertising line; that is, if you're really sorry."

Usherwood nodded gratefully.

"Gosh," said he, "I will, too."

In the junior common room, a crowd of outraged Godwinkles, grown suddenly keen, discussed this blow with bated breath.

"I suppose," said Marriott, presently, "we

can all guess who split about that cold bath show, can't we?"

There was no hesitation. The answer was unanimous.

"Roscoe."

"He hasn't dared show his face yet," remarked Gardner. "We'd better go out and look for him."

They gathered round. Somewhere Roscoe was lurking in his shame. They set out, dangerously angry.

CHAPTER XIII

ROSCOE AT BAY

ROSCOE sat upon one of the benches that faced the first fifteen ground, his interests centred for the time being in the adventures of one Walter Winchester, a gentleman of an apparently elastic code of morals, the same being chronicled in a tattered volume which had been handed on from boy to boy at Harley for many a year, and which was generally at the disposal of any new comer who cared to probe that gentleman's secrets. James's demeanour was not at the time particularly characteristic of the schoolboy sneak, and although the fact that he had got another boy into trouble and his house into a rage was not worrying him, yet he had actually and in fact added sneaking to his list of proven accomplishments. Mr. Godwin had met him coming out of the house bath-rooms after his ducking. He had been the last to leave, and Mr. Godwin was on his way down to the dining-room. Roscoe had looked angry and bedraggled, more rat-like than ever, and in his hand he had been carrying a soaked vest, and a towel with the appearance of being "last week's."

Mr. Godwin had waxed curious.

"What," he had said, "is the meaning of this? What have you been doing? Did you hear the supper bell sound? Why are you in this state? Why is that vest wet?"

Now previously, when Roscoe had had a chance to sneak, he had passed it over as being of no assistance. But he had no qualms on the point. If explanations of fact were going to save him, they would be forthcoming. That, to him, was logic.

He had none of your public-school spirit, and he had never received any benefits from others who had. His theory was to look after himself and hang all else, and it seemed in this case that a true statement which would explain away appearances would not only save him, but would also bring down the wrath of Mr. Godwin upon the heads of his tormentors, and thus wreak vengeance in respect of his ducking. So he had told his story. Mr. Godwin had listened, and, highly incensed, had eventually gone to his desk at "prep." time thinking deeply on the course he might best adopt in dealing with Usherwood. Roscoe had been late in arriving in the common room that evening, as he had had to change again, and then have his supper; his absence had been noticed, and when Mr. Godwin had made mention of his informer as a "new boy" suspicion had fallen upon Roscoe. It was not, however, until the following day, when the Head's decision had been made known, that the ire of the other common-room fellows had been really roused.

At first they had just "placed" the informer in their mind's eye, and had done nothing. Some of them had been ducked themselves, and felt a slight basic sympathy with Roscoe. Now, however, that they realised what the loss of Usherwood meant to the house, they sat up and took considerable notice. There had been many worse cases of sneaking in Godwin's. After all, a man who, threatened by the law, will cheerfully withhold his evidence-in-chief to save the man responsible (in whom he has no friendly interest whatever and who has ragged him without mercy) must be a valuable specimen of the best type of public school boy. Roscoe was not that, and he had hard justice and cold reason on his side. But that was not the point.

The junior Godwinkles had been growing almost keen under Laing's influence. They had been looking forward to an improved showing by their house in their first Shield match. Now the captain was lost to them, and, rightly or wrongly, they blamed Roscoe. The fact that Usherwood would probably have been transferred in any case after his baiting of Mr. Godwin did not concern them. When, therefore, a righteously indignant band of young Godwinkles came upon Roscoe on his bench they were thirsting for his blood. James, all unaware of their approach, bent over his book, and his eyes watered in feverish anticipation of Mr. Winchester's next move.

Marriott, whose dislike of Roscoe was amazingly cordial, stepped forward and knocked the ragged volume out of his hand and high into the air. He then stood before the Mongrel Maggot with his hands on his hips. The others gathered round. Roscoe got to his feet.

"What did you do that for?" he said.

"You once nearly crippled Gardner for life, because you said he'd sneaked. Matter o' fact

he hadn't at all, but you thought it was a good idea to pull away a form as he was going to sit down. Now you've sneaked yourself. What have you got to say about it?"

"I've not got anything to say to *you*," said Roscoe, making for his precious volume.

Somebody stepped out from the group and kicked this away before he could reach it; another stopped it and kicked it back; the rest joining in, found it a passable football, and played with it until the pages lay around crumpled and torn to shreds. Roscoe watched this with a Napoleonic gloom, daunted sufficiently to prevent any effort at retaliation.

When they wearied of their game the Godwinkles gathered round again, and Marriott continued:—

"I suppose you know that Usherwood's going to be chucked into School House? We've lost him for the shield match. You've done a good day's work."

"Serve him right," said Roscoe.

"We're going to send you to Coventry. I don't suppose that'll affect you much because nobody who can help it speaks to you as it is. We can't do much else to a man that sneaks. If we tore you to pieces, you'd probably stick yourself together again, and go and tell Godwin, and then more of the fifteen might get dropped on. We're not going to risk that for you, but you'll find your life jolly miserable after this."

Roscoe glared at them malignantly. Gardner advanced, took hold of the handkerchief that showed itself in his overcoat pocket, and, pulling it out, threw it into his face. Somebody else grabbed at his cap and kicked it into the tree over the bench, where it remained. Another, unable longer to control his emotion, gave tongue in a strictly vernacular manner, and pushed him backwards on to the bench. Roscoe recovered himself, and hit his assailant on the head. Nothing loth, the latter at once retaliated, and they set to. Everything pointed to an exciting scrap taking place, when an interruption came.

Menzies strode across the corner of the first ground and came up to the group.

"Stop that," he said. "How on earth am I to find my fag when I want him if this sort of thing is going on. Leave him alone."

"He sneaked to Godwin," said Marriott.

Menzies was at the time feeling quite satisfied with his discovery that he had not also been incriminated in Roscoe's evidence.

"Well," said he, "you've all yapped in your time. He's a mug—you should expect him to behave like one."

"But Usherwood——" began Gardner.

"Bah!" said Menzies. "He doesn't care. I'll bet he's mighty glad to get out of the house. What's it matter?"

"We shall get licked frightfully in the shield."

"So we should anyway. I shall tell Laing I'm not going to play in a game that's going to make us all look absolute fools. You'd better do the same, and he'll probably scratch."

"I'm going to play," said Gardner. "I want my house cap."

"Bosh!" said Menzies, contemptuously. Then he looked across at Roscoe. "Come on, Maggot, I want you."

He strolled away, and Roscoe followed him. The Godwinkles watched them walk back to the school, with expressions in which anger and contempt fought for mastery. Either way their temper boded ill for James.

In the meantime Menzies was changing the subject.

"I want you to go down to the old Kent woman, and get me some stuff for a feed to-night," he was saying. "I don't go to her as a rule, but Hudson's are sold out of mixed biscuits."

"She won't serve me," said Roscoe. "I went in the other day, and she told me so. Her girl's afraid to say no, but when the old woman's there she slings me out."

"Stuff! You tell her it's for me. She'll have to serve you."

"She won't. It's no good!"

"Oh! Well, you jolly well go down and try, and if she won't I'll go down and kick up no end of a shine. You can tell her that."

Roscoe did. The old lady was adamant and expressed her willingness to receive Menzies or, if necessary, the Head himself.

"I never want," she remarked, "to 'ave any trouble wi' the boys from the school at all. But you come in here and acted dishonest, and I don't want to see you no more. If the other young genelmen wants any sweets they must send somebody else."

Menzies went down in majestic wrath. He wore his monitor's cap, and swept into the shop, the embodiment of dignity.

"Look here, Mrs. Kent," he said, pompously, "I can't have you refusing to serve the boy I send down for my stuff. His quarrels with you are nothing to do with me. I send down my fag and you'll have to serve him."

Mrs. Kent put forward her point of view with engaging me kness.

"That's all very well," said he, "but all I can say is that if you won't serve one of the boys from my house you needn't serve any at all. I'll have the shop put out of bounds."

Mrs. Kent bobbed behind her counter and rearranged her curls.

"I never want," said she, "to have any trouble with the school genelmen at all—never."

"No," said Menzies; "of course not. They keep you alive."

"Suttenly," said she, rubbing her fat hands together. "If you ask me as a favour to serve that young fellow, I will. I never want to have——"

"No," said Menzies. "Well, he's waiting outside now. Good day."

And as he beckoned Roscoe within, he strode out again and away up the main road with the air of one who has been favourably compared to Lord Kitchener.

Mrs. Kent received James with a somewhat altered demeanour.

"I 'ave talked to your friend," said she, haughtily, "an' 'e agrees wi' me. But 'e 'as also suggested that if you don't want the news of what you did 'ere to get *all* round the school, you'd better keep in wi' me. I shall charge you a extra price for all you 'ave, young man."

Roscoe pondered. He took it for granted that Menzies had actually said this, and he did not want to question openly the reasonableness of his advice. Also he did not wish the school generally to hear of his performance early in the term. He pulled a few coins out of his pocket and counted them.

"I'm not going to pay extra price for *his*."

"No," said she; "but, you'd better buy somethin' yourself, hadn't you?"

Roscoe did so, and retired with an ill grace.

CHAPTER XIV

A FAG NO LONGER

"THE point is," Menzies was saying, "that we shall be rotted by the whole school if we play in the Shield games. Houses have often stood down before now if they had no chance."

"Still, I think we ought to play," said Symington, who had visions of house colours.

"Well, *I* don't want to be made to look an ass."

It occurred to Symington to point out that there would be nothing in this, as nobody would notice the difference; but he dared not openly flout Menzies.

"And," continued the latter, "I shall tell Laing so, too."

He did.

Laing was amused.

"Your support of the house," said he, gravely, "is much appreciated. All the same that's not the kind of speech that earns hoarse cheers from the gallery."

"I call it rot!" said Menzies.

"You can call it what you like as long as you run away into the woods and do your calling. We shall play all right, and Morrison will skipper you."

"He isn't on the committee."

"Oh, yes, he is. I proposed him, and Symington seconded. It was a quorum. You weren't there at the time. He takes Usherwood's place."

Menzies muttered various meaningless comments, glanced insolently round the walls of Laing's study, and strolled out with his hands in his pockets.

"Good day," said Laing.

Godwin's met Blake's in the first round, and were beaten by twenty-seven points to three. It was a poor game with bright interludes. In due course Blake's met Canaby's, and Canaby's passing on, defeated Sawyer's in the final. Ironically, Canaby's was Laing's old house.

Soon after this the school broke up and Roscoe, by the graciousness of Mr. Chynn, went to the place that, for want of a more suitable name, he called home. Throughout the Christmas holidays Mr. Chynn busied himself in research. There was no feast. James was not taken to town and given a royal time, or anything like it. He was left to entertain himself, and did so in the way that had become natural to him. He was bored to excess, but then he had been equally disinterested at school. Roscoe was of the type who deplore the necessity of life, yet die with as poor a grace as they live. He was not glad to get back to school; he went with the dispassionate moodiness that seldom left him, and arriving, found that the Easter term had little fresh to offer him. Football went on at Harley for the greater part of this term; boxing, fives, and the running track claimed each their supporters. It was never, however, a great term, possessing something of the slackness of 'Varsity football after the match at Queen's Club.

But this did not concern Roscoe; games, so far as he was concerned, did not exist. He

found no changes at Godwin's. Laing, Symington, and Menzies were still at the wheel and they welcomed him in their various ways. Laing gave a curt nod, to show that he recognised the Maggot.. Symington was silkily facetious on the topic of Christmas pudding. Menzies was loudly garrulous. But the great change had yet to come. Laing sent for Roscoe on the second day of term.

"You will be glad to hear," said he, "that you won't be a fag any longer. There are enough new chaps to go round. You're free now, except that you're still at the beck and call of prefects and monitors if required. Don't put on airs. Just be grateful for your liberty and give the new man a leg-up."

Roscoe said "Thanks, Laing," quite politely, and went away. Within an hour Menzies called to him from his study. Roscoe appeared without haste.

"I'm not a fag any longer," said he.

"No?"

"Laing's just told me."

"What d'you expect me to do? Jump up and congratulate you?"

"No—only——"

"Only you didn't like being bellowed at?"

"Well——"

"Right. Well, now, just you dash over to Blake's as hard as you can pelt and ask Tison to meet me by the tuck-shop in ten minutes—and buck up. And next time I shout, come quicker."

"But I'm not——"

"You're still a kid, still a maggot, you know. Don't forget that."

Roscoe wandered away houghtfully. A well-shot elastic band hastened his departure.

"Run!" shouted Menzies. "Run, you little beast, will you?"

Roscoe broke into a jog-trot. The new order of things seemed a mixed blessing.

CHAPTER XV

"PASSING IT ON".

IT is noticeable in this life that the one immediate aim of the man upon whom an amusing catch has been successfully "worked" is to appreciate the joke from both points of view. Hence, having fallen into a trap, he hurriedly recovers himself, and sets it again for the next man. The same rule applies at school. The characters of certain boys so order things that sometimes a boy bullied himself becomes a bully; he who is scorned, scorns in his turn, life and all in it.

Roscoe was so affected. Harleyans had taken their own line with him. They had discovered his evilness, and having failed to cure him, contented themselves, individually and *en masse*, by making him feel uncomfortable. Masters and boys alike detested him and strove to make him realise the fact. The result was that James, looking around for relief, decided that this might best be gained by enjoying such goings on from the point of view of the top-dog. A scapegoat, a laughing-stock himself, he was seized with a desire to pass on the system, and by way of an antidote to his own troubles, he sought to enjoy to the full the pleasure of making some other boy uneasy in mind or body. He decided that life's furtive small shot when aimed at him must ricochet, and eventually lodge itself in another weaker soul

This was not entirely a new theme with Roscoe. For years it had been his hobby to harass those likely to harass him, to get his blow in first. This, however, was a more serious, a more immediate matter, and when he looked round him his eye lighted upon Dennison.

Dennison had come to the school that term, and had joined Roscoe's form for English. Soon after his advent he had gained some slight notoriety by attempting, during a hot bath behind a locked door, to tuck his leg round the back of his neck after the manner of a street acrobat he had seen outside a theatre in town. A lithe youth, he had succeeded in doing this, but when to complete the trick he sought to get his leg back he found that it had stuck. For a time he had just worried at it, but presently becoming alarmed, he commenced to shout lustily for help. He bellowed, at last, so loudly that people rose in their wrath and ran to the bath-room door with a view to causing the nuisance to cease. Then they found that the door was locked. They beat upon it with clenched fists, whilst Dennison sat in his bath, and screamed louder and louder. Others joined the ranks of the would-be rescuers. They shouted to him to "shake it off," as if he were merely troubled with an incipient cold; to "jerk it," to roll out of the bath and unlock the door. Eventually Mr. Godwin arrived and having soundly censured the wretched youth through the keyhole, sent for tools with which to force the lock. As this was about to be done, however, Dennison suddenly succeeded in releasing himself, and was so delighted that even three bad marks "for tomfoolery," and one hundred lines

WHO CARES?

By HYLTON CLEAVER

for an unnamed crime (which Mr. Godwin secretly supposed to be a practical joke aimed at himself), failed to check his exuberance.

Later this youth had confessed to Roscoe, next to whom he slept, an aptitude for lyrical verse, and, encouraged, had actually shown him a few examples of his more sentimental efforts. In reply to Roscoe's inquiry as to whether he could write "saucy things," he had held out hopes that his powers might possibly extend even *so* far. At the time James was feeling very sore against Menzies, who had not turned out to be the guide, philosopher, and friend that Roscoe had at first thought him.

He now conceived the idea of persuading Dennison to turn out a cunning verse of acid satire, detailing the faults of Menzies as seen by others. This Roscoe was then to copy out, and lay upon Menzies' table. To avoid any possible vengeance on the part of the latter, he proposed to leave a blank for the name "Menzies" in the verse, so that this could not be definitely proved to apply to him except by an admission that the cap fitted; and, as a further precaution, Roscoe was prepared to swear by all his gods that the effort was not his. His would be the pleasant standpoint of the onlooker, the firebrand; Dennison did the dangerous work, and Menzies was the butt.

Dennison, anxious to ingratiate himself with Roscoe, whom he did not at first know to be the newest black sheep in Godwin's, duly turned out the following verse:—

——— is caddish in his ways, and ugly in his face,
He bullies, and his private life is really a disgrace.
He slacks, and sneaks, and smokes, and swanks, and thinks nobody knows,
But they all guess that he boozes, by the colour of his nose.

This Roscoe approved, and, when copied out, he laid it upon Menzies' table.

The next move in the game was provided by Menzies, who duly discovered the verse. Now when Menzies cared, he was capable of much craft and cunning. In hitting a man he took no notice of the belt. His idea was to wound in the most vulnerable part, irrespective of ethics. So he thought for a while, and decided that he would not summon Roscoe, for although he recognised his writing, he recognised also that the boy would protest vehemently that Menzies was not aimed at, and that in that case he could not very well take action unless (as Roscoe had foreseen) he admitted that the cap fitted. He therefore took a line of action against which Roscoe had, by the way, omitted to defend himself. He took the piece of paper,

Fighting furiously, the dogs rolled into the road, while Barbara strove in vain to pull her pets apart.

and at the first opportunity placed it upon the desk of Mr. Wilberforce, whom he knew to be Roscoe's form master, and who, he thought, would treat the matter more satisfactorily than a master like Mr. Godwin. He also decided that henceforward he would, in other ways, spare no pains to make Roscoe's life unbearable, which he did.

The fun began the next morning, when Mr. Wilberforce, in his turn, discovered the verse. Now Mr. Wilberforce, as has been previously mentioned, was a cynic, and, like Menzies, he did not act hastily in this case. He read the verse through carefully, and smiled to himself. Recognising the writing, he then called upon Roscoe to stand up.

The Mongrel Maggot did so.

"Although you could invariably do with a hair-cut, Roscoe," said he, "I did not know that you were a budding poet."

James flushed alarmingly, looked startled, and made no answer.

Mr. Wilberforce thought for a while, then commenced in slow, clear tones, to read out the verse. The class tittered. One fat boy in particular laughed himself into hysteria, and was ultimately requested to leave the room. Guilt was clearly marked on Roscoe's every feature.

"You wrote that?" said the form-master, inquiringly.

"No, sir," said Roscoe.

Mr. Wilberforce remained calm; he invariably did.

"Do you know," said he, "who did?"

Roscoe saw his opening, and dashed at it like a man at a stile when pursued by a mad bull. But even in his excitement he strove to exercise some slight diplomacy. His one thought was that he could clear himself. He knew Dennison for a type of boy that most others would term decent. He knew he would feel bound to own up.

"Oh, sir," said he, ingratiatingly, "I wouldn't like to say, sir."

"Is the boy," said Mr. Wilberforce, pressingly, "in the class at present?"

Again Roscoe explained that he would not care to say. He reckoned that these honourable tactics would greatly assist his case.

Mr. Wilberforce looked round the room.

"If the boy who wrote this," said he, "is here now, I should be glad if he would stand up."

There was a tense silence. Nobody had noticed Dennison. Nervous and embarrassed, he had been sitting biting his nails in a corner. He was an almost unknown new boy. But he knew the law, and he stood up.

Mr. Wilberforce bent his brows upon him in a grim frown behind which he strove to hide his amusement. He tried to speak harshly, and failed.

"You are Dennison," said he, "are you not?"

"Yes, sir," quakingly.

There was another silence. Then once again Mr. Wilberforce picked up the piece of paper and read the verse aloud. Then he smiled and nodded his head.

"It is good," said he; "very clever. I have seldom seen a personality so aptly caricatured in verse. I must mention your name to the editor of the *Harleyan*. He would like to publish some of your work, I'm sure." Then he gave a short laugh. He knew that he was going to score heavily. He had the happy self-satisfaction of the man who is certain of the facts, however darkly hidden, and who is fencing with his opponent skilfully, and winning all the way. "Why," he continued, tapping the paper, approvingly, "I recognise Roscoe as plainly as anything."

There was a brief pause, then the class burst again into roars of delight. The Maggot had been scored against. He stood, flushing angrily, at his desk. They turned upon him and laughed in his face.

Presently Mr. Wilberforce lifted his hand for silence; the noise died down.

"I think," said he, with his sober smile, "you might ask the portly Mortimer to come in again, Summers. He might like to join in this joke, and his laugh has a cheering sound."

Again they burst into shrieks of amusement. Roscoe still stood at his desk, his untidy hair more ruffled than usual, his features heavy with sullen fury.

Sometimes a bullet, intended to ricochet, will strike an object and shoot back at the man who discharged it. At such times the result is painful.

CHAPTER XVI

THE TURNING POINT

No matter what line a man may take in life, accidents are bound to alter his aim. Little things crop up and change character almost subconsciously. Occasionally those little things are friends, and more often than not those friends are feminine. So it was that Roscoe, plodding his disagreeable way

By HYLTON CLEAVER

through Harley, was, almost without his knowledge, turned aside.

You must know that in the hamlet of Harley there were two dogs. Probably there were more, but these two were especial, and had their quarters at Westholme, one of the houses that bordered the long, white Harley Hill, a mile or so out of the village; and of these one, Samuel, was a bulldog, and the other, Pip, an Airedale. Between these two there was a feud of long tanding which, known to their owners, was deemed sufficient reason why Pip should be chained to his kennel at one end of the garden, and Samuel near the stable door, out of sight of Pip. When one barked, the other replied with an enthusiasm born of a longing for his blood. Once they had almost got at each other and had been diverted at the critical moment by a quick-thinking gardener. They could never be taken out together, and were seldom allowed to see one another at all, but each was such a well-loved pet that a parting was not to be thought of. So they lived their separate lives, waiting for "the day." Now you may keep a lion cub as a pet, but one day you may cut yourself, and, seeing your blood, he will forget the hand that has fed him; then you must step lively. And so it was certain that, sooner or later, these two warriors would clash.

One day they did. Each was about to be taken for a walk. Mrs. North was unchaining Pip, and Barbara, her niece, was attending to Samuel. It was a mistake to have made these ceremonies simultaneous, for as Barbara came to the gate, Samuel tugging at the leash in an effort to end his life by strangulation, Pip, away in the distance, caught sight of him through the garden gate. It was enough. The time had come for a stupendous effort. He leaped into the air; the leash tugged him back. Samuel heard the commotion and turned in his tracks, to answer the challenge. Again Pip leaped. Mrs. North strove to tighten her grip. It was no good. With a fury that tore the leash from her wrist, Pip hurled himself towards the distant Samuel. Sudden freedom possessed him with a devil of speed. Samuel, square and British, stood straining at his own leash as the Airedale came at him. Barbara made a desperate effort to drag him into the road. Then the two clashed, and foam was flying.

Up the hill came Roscoe. He walked in his own down-at-heel, slovenly way, hands in pockets, feet dragging along the ground, overcoat held together by one button, cap perched anyhow on his head. As he came towards Westholme he heard the blare of the long-looked for battle, and hurried on interestedly. Now it has been said that there are two sorts of men in the world—those that can stop a dog-fight, and those that cannot. There is, by the bye, a third class—those who do not know whether they can stop the fight or not, but who are prepared to dash in and have a shot. To this class Roscoe belonged. It has already been said that he was no funk, and though he was no sportsman he had some basic devilry.

The dogs rolled out into the road, dust, and blood, and froth flying round them as their teeth fought for their honour. Behind them came Barbara, pale and anxious, tugging helplessly at the animal's leash, shouting desperately at her pets to stop. In the doorway Mrs. North was calling frenziedly for pepper-pots, brooms, and buckets of water. Roscoe watched stolidly for a moment. Then it seemed that he had better act. There was something deep within Roscoe that gave him his head at times like this. He ran up and threw himself rather stupidly at the dogs, seizing their collars and kicking at them as he could.

Barbara threw her weight on to the leash. As she did so Roscoe uttered a suppressed cry and jumped back. Blood was on his hand, and the deep slashes of many teeth. Then, as Barbara turned to him, Mrs. North came running from the house with a pepper-pot, a maid stumbling valiantly behind her with a bucket of water. For a time the pepper proved ineffectual, but it was bound to do the trick, and at last, tired and scarcely able to stand, the two dogs fell apart and were secured. Their chests heaved, blood and froth dribbled from their mouths and disfigured their torn faces. But for the moment they were helpless, and other assistance arriving, they were each taken back and attended to.

Barbara stopped behind. Roscoe, pale and sullen, was standing foolishly against the wall of the house, holding a remarkably soiled handkerchief round his left hand. Barbara looked at him with concern. He saw that she was of about his own age, and essentially "outdoor." Other than that, and the fact that her hair was plaited, and her eyes big and friendly, he took in little.

"I'm so sorry," said she. "It must hurt awfully. Will you come in and let us cauterise it for you? I think we've got some stuff."

Roscoe murmured that it did not matter.

Barbara did not agree. She opened the gate

and hurried him up to the front door. Mrs. North, wiping her hands on a large handkerchief, came out to meet them.

"They'll be all right," said she. "Huggins and the boy are seeing to them for the moment. Did they bite you?" she continued, turning to James.

"He's got an awful place on his hand," said Barbara, anxiously. "What can we do?"

Mrs. North had a commanding presence. There was a large, capable, motherly atmosphere about her. Roscoe suddenly felt like a small child. He suffered himself to be led indoors. Mrs. North murmured "Caustic potash" and "boracic," and disappeared upstairs. Roscoe sat down and wished, in general, that he had never been born, and, in particular, that he did not feel sick.

Barbara stood before him and looked worried. Mrs. North came down again with a handful of articles of a surgical appearance and sent Barbara for the doctor. Then Roscoe fainted, which was not at all what a proper hero would have done—certainly not.

He came to, to find many bandages round his hand, and an aching pain up his forearm. A solemn gentleman of philosophical appearance stood before him with clasped hands, as if watching a chemical experiment. As Roscoe sat up and took notice of the fact that his collar was off, he nodded his head approvingly and reached out for his bag.

"Good," said he; "you are at the school, my lad, are you not?"

For the moment Roscoe suspected that this man was testing his senses by ascertaining whether he knew where he was, and was about to reply coldly that he was obviously *not* at the school, when the doctor explained himself.

"I mean," said he; holding up James's cap, "I see this is the Harley crest."

"Yes," said the Maggot, without pride.

"It is a nasty bite, but I dare say that you'll soon get all right. We seem to have got it nice and clean."

To Roscoe's mind the man had an annoying manner of running on from one thing to another. That is al very well in an obstacle race, but in conversation with the sick it makes for incoherence. Roscoe tried to associate "bite" with "crest," and could not remember that a bite appeared in the quarterings on his cap. He gazed stupidly at the doctor.

"I will call in and see Dr. Sharp on my way home and explain things. Mrs. North has kindly promised to drive you back to the school. What is your name?"

Roscoe told him; then:—

"It's all right," he said, with a sudden flash of understanding. "I can walk."

Mrs. North smiled, shook her head, and went out of the room with the solemn doctor. Barbara was still regarding him thoughtfully. James was pleased to notice that she did not, on being left alone with him, flush awkwardly and cast down her eyes. Instead she drew near in friendly fashion.

"Whose house are you in?" she asked.

"Godwin's," said he.

"Do you play for your house at football?"

Roscoe shook his head. The conversation was taking an unfortunate trend.

"I don't play football," he explained.

"Aren't you allowed to? Hard luck! What *do* you play?"

"I don't play games at all."

"Not *at all*?"

"No."

"How rotten! How old are you?"

"Nearly sixteen," said he, awkwardly.

"What do you do, then?"

Roscoe thought hard. At the moment he could not think of anything that he could truthfully say he "did," and Barbara's manner seemed to expect and demand truth. It seemed absurd to explain that he wandered about with his hands in his pockets and made himself disliked.

"Oh," he said, at last, "I don't do anything much."

A little dissatisfied, she tried another topic.

"I think it was awfully plucky of you to try and stop that fight."

Roscoe scowled and denied the fact. Then, as Barbara began to explain the story of Samuel and Pip, Mrs. North returned.

"The trap will be ready in a minute," said she; "if you feel well enough, we'll take you back. Is it hurting much?"

"Oh, no," said he, gruffly, "thank you."

He rose, and reached for his collar. Mrs. North put it on for him and tied his tie in capable fashion. She then helped him carefully into his overcoat, and ushered him out. Barbara, who was going to attend to the dogs, said good-bye at the door.

"Perhaps," remarked Mrs. North, "Roscoe will come up to tea with us one day?"

Roscoe objected to being "talked at" in the third person most strongly, but he contrived to answer politely that he would like to do so. He foresaw that this might relieve the

monotony occasioned by the time so frequently on his hands.

"On Saturday?" said Mrs. North. "After the match? Can you meet us at the school and come back? We usually go to the matches."

"Oh, yes," said Roscoe, "I think so." Previously he had never attended a school match. It seemed that his education was about to begin.

"Very well," said Mrs. North, nodding. "Will you sit up beside me?"

As Roscoe clambered up, two Harleyans came up the hill on the other side of the road. He looked across. As luck would have it, they were Menzies and Symington.

"Great Scott!" said the former, softly, "*there's* the Maggot. I've been looking for him all the afternoon. Little beast!"

Symington furtively lifted his cap.

"And," said Menzies, "he's got his hand bound up—look!"

Symington looked.

"My hat!" said he.

At a time when he forgot temporarily his hair and finger-nails, it was charac eristic of Symington that he thought swiftly of his hat

Roscoe turned and raised his hat to Barbara, fortunately remembering this courtesy as one practised by other youths, before they drove off.

Barbara stood on the doorstep and smiled good-bye, watching him interestedly as the trap drove away. Then she shut the door and went into the garden where the dogs, separated by many obstacles, were receiving attention.

Had James but known it, he, too, was to receive attention. Act II. in he making o Roscoe was about to commence.

(*To be continued*)

ACTIVITY IN OUR VILLAGE

The Ancient: "I say! Something must 'a' 'appened! I seen a man run past just now—an' what's more, he's the second to-day!"

The Master of Haileybury

AN IMPRESSION OF MR. F. B. MALIM, M.A.

WHEN I was at school the sparrows used to chirp and twitter without ceasing in the creeper which clothed the windows of the Head. It was just such a feathered choir under the dome that greeted me the other day at Haileybury, and which, when presently I chatted with the master, sent me back by some odd shift of memory to another scene, another man, and other times. One part of me was engaged with Mr. Malim, the other had leaped a space of thirty years and was standing at diffident attention before a man of seventy, whose voice was failing, whose mien inspired awe; before whom we veritably trembled.

In my days head masters of our public schools were ageing men, and their best work very likely lay behind them. To-day the pendulum swings the other way; and the great school exacts from him who rules it the most buoyant and eager years he has to give, an ardent mentality, the primest powers. This is much to the advantage of to-day, being the surest guarantee against standing still.

My first impression of the Master of Haileybury was purely physical; it was his remarkable resemblance to Mr. F. E. Smith. In 1894, when Malim, of Trinity, was president of the Cambridge Union (one of the most coveted distinctions of the University), he crossed more than one forensic sword with Smith of Wadham, what time the latter and Sir John Simon were *principes inter pares* at the Oxford Union. I am not inclined, from what I saw of The Man—young, incisive, and virile—to believe that from these encounters he emerged worsted.

After Cambridge he spent twelve years at Marlborough, nine with his house, and then four and a half years as Head of Sedbergh. Here very swiftly he established his reputation as a forceful and dominant individuality.

During our conversation in his pleasant study, which had been the principal's room even in the old East India College days, the next impression he conveyed to the writer's mind was one of steadfastness, of serene strong sense, of intense confidence in himself and in his life's work. One discerned the strong man armed at every point. Indeed, it is impossible to spend many minutes with The Man of Haileybury without sensing something of a personality which has marked its route and will follow that route unswervingly in all weathers; without fear, without compromise, and without favour. He must, for instance, be a youth of extraordinary parts who could put Mr. Malim into two minds for long; and, again, a youth of very singular courage who, wittingly, would cross Mr. Malim's will.

My next impression was gathered in Big School—for this was Speech Day—when, on behalf of the O.H.'s and other subscribers, Lord Sydenham presented to the college the new Big School which was begun two years ago. Its predecessor had a long time been inadequate to the requirements and the dignity of the school, and the noble building that has now taken its place commemorates the fiftieth year of Haileybury proper.

It was very cool in here on Speech Day, a very grateful refuge from the sun; it was an apt setting to the master's voice, as he spoke, in polished periods, with never halt for word or imagery, of his school's ideals. The scholar was speaking, but the orator also. Plain living and high thinking—a worn phrase. Yet it slipped with fresh significance from his tongue; his gesture and his tone had made it live. There will be little stint of "high thinking" at Haileybury while Mr. Malim is there to direct its mind.

A very common weakness keeps many people from finding what is near them interesting; they see that only on its paltry side. They walk through life, as Charles Wagner has put it, with their eyes fixed on marvellous sights along the horizon and burning with vague ardour for humanity, while they tread meanwhile on the feet of the passers-by. It is the very converse of such mental attitude which remains with the writer as his last impression of The Man of Haileybury. Neither sentimentalist nor visionary, Mr. Malim will never burn to right distant wrongs. But he will see that no wrongs go unrighted in his own kingdom.

Mr. F. B. Malim, M.A., Head Master of Haileybury College.

By HENRY GREENLY

HOW TO MAKE A MODEL FIELD GUN

SOMETHING more than the familiar "model brass cannon" is required by model makers in these days of long-range artillery, and for this reason the writer, in submitting to Captainites a design for a working model gun, has chosen as a prototype the now well-known French 75mm. field gun. This gun is very popular with the allied forces. In the matter of small detail the model is, of course, only a modified copy, but in general external design it is a fairly accurate replica.

Model cannon can be made to fire ordinary gunpowder, in which case the pieces would be muzzle loading, and it is also possible to adopt a breech-loading pistol action, using small rim-fire blank or bulleted cartridges. Such guns, however, may be voted as rather dangerous toys. Means are therefore suggested by the following notes to make the gun-fire realistic but with all real danger eliminated. Ordinary toy paper ("Amorce") caps are proposed for ammunition, and by enclosing them in a chamber formed in the breech-block the smoke will issue from the muzzle of the gun. Furthermore, the explosion will be found strong enough to eject a pea or a plug of wood with enough power to knock over toy soldiers at 10ft. or 12ft. range. The force of the explosion may be enhanced by using two or more of the paper caps, the ammunition being increased in effectiveness by cutting off all superfluous paper before using it.

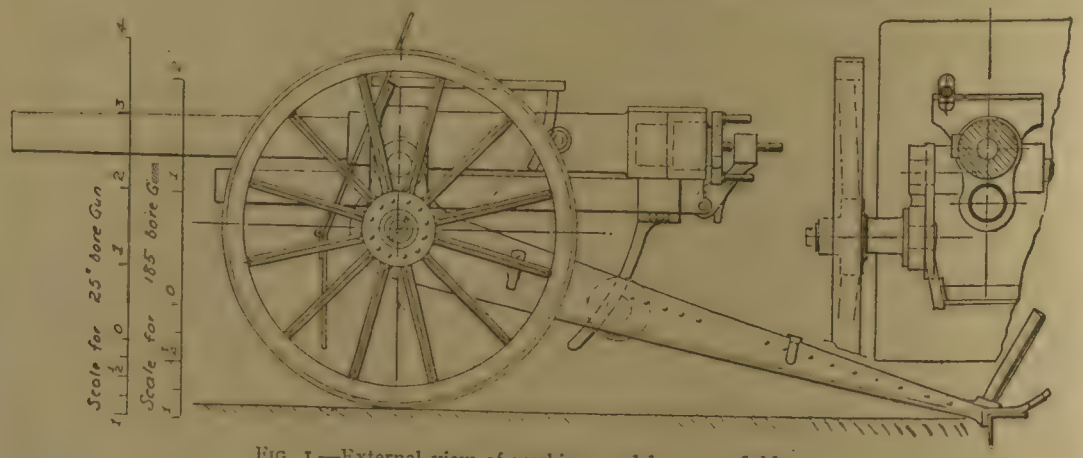


FIG. 1.—External view of working model 75mm. field gun.

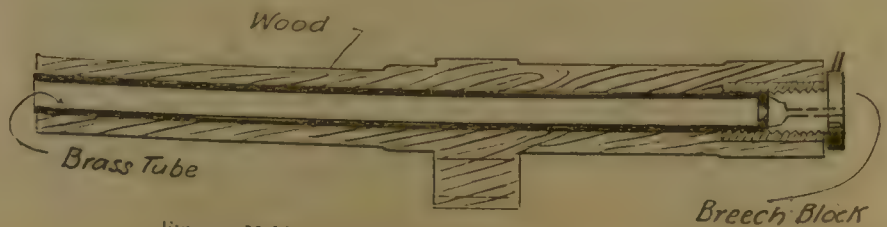


FIG. 2.—Making the barrel of wood lined with metal tube.

The recoil chamber, it will be noticed, contains the spring working the trigger or firin

hammer. This hammer hits a pin, and placed inside the breech-block an anvil—a steel washer—receives the blow, the caps being placed between the head of the firing-pin and the washer. The hole in the washer allows the

Of course, such a model should be used with paper caps only, and the breech end may be made as shown in the sketch, Fig. 2.

For an all-metal model the drawings, Figs. 1 and 3, should be followed, scale being given

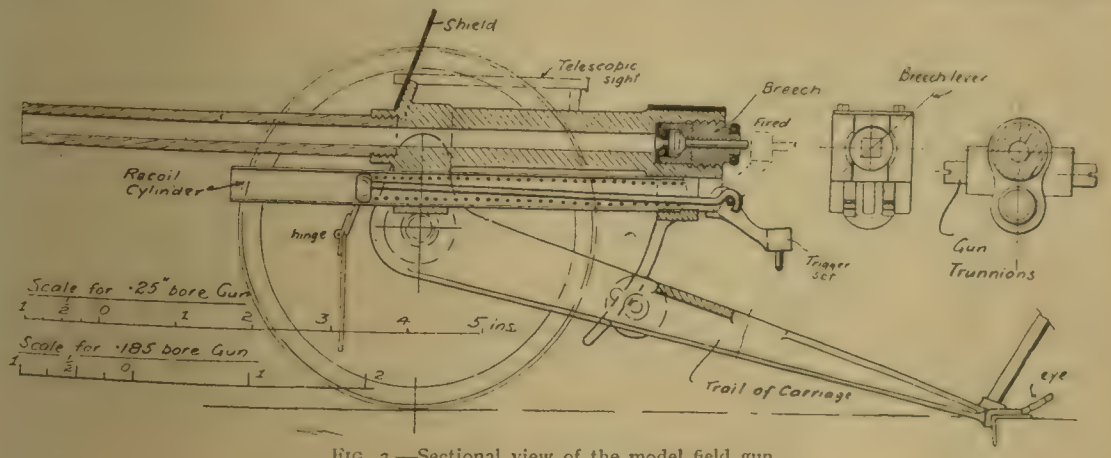


FIG. 3.—Sectional view of the model field gun.

products of the explosion to flow to the gun-barrel. Of course, a charge of gunpowder could be inserted in the barrel and be fired by the "Amorce" paper caps. But this would make the piece quite an outdoor toy, and one which would require a certain amount of care in handling. So much for the general design and operation of the model gun. The construction may be varied according to the tools and time available. The sectional drawings show the model as it would be made in soundest possible way, with the barrel made entirely of metal. The writer has made model guns of wood, an inner-liner of metal (brass) tube being driven into the bored wooden barrel to give it strength and to resist the action of the "fire." For the "artillery" wheels of the carriage the wheels of a cheap wooden toy cart may be

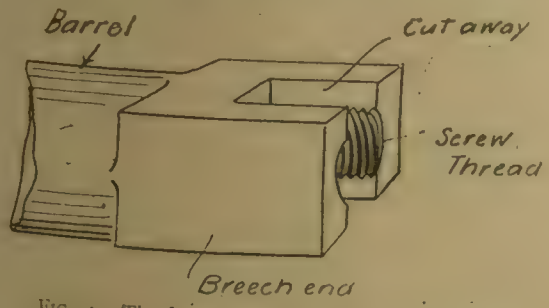


FIG. 4.—The breech end, with interrupted screw.

commandeered. The carriage may be made of wood. Such models should be made only in a large size—say, double the scale given for the .185" (3/16") model gun illustrated herewith.

for two sizes, viz., a 1/4" bore gun and one with a 3/16" (.185") bore. The back half of the gun barrel is a gun-metal casting, for which a wooden pattern will first be required. The muzzle end is made of a piece of thick brass tube costing sixpence or a shilling, according to which size of gun is adopted. The tube should

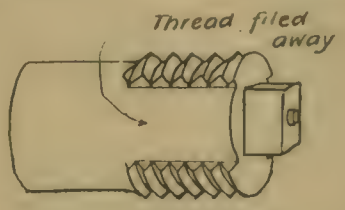


FIG. 5.—The breech-block.

be softened at muzzle by heating it in a fire and plunging it in cold water, and then giving a few taps with a hammer to bell the end out. The bore will require clearing out with a drill after this, as the hammering-up spreads the metal, and, as well as extending the outside, will slightly close up the bore.

The casting of the breech end will require drilling to the same diameter as the bore of the tube forming the muzzle end, and also counter-bored at each end to the larger diameters shown on the drawings. The muzzle tube may be screwed or driven into the casting, the joint being secured by solder.

The breech-block may be arranged to be withdrawn in numerous ways. For simplicity's sake the writer has suggested a screwed breech-block, the thread of which may be complete or interrupted. In the whole thread method

the breech-block is simply a screwed plug which will need as many turns of the block as there are threads on its screwed portion. If the interrupted thread system, as employed in actual breech-loading cannon, is used, then only a quarter of a turn of the breech-block is necessary to lock it in position. The construction proceeds just as in the case of the full-threaded breech. After all has been made and assembled, and, if thought fit, the gun is tried, the breech may be slotted as shown in Fig. 4, and the thread of the breech-block filed away as shown in Fig. 5. In each case

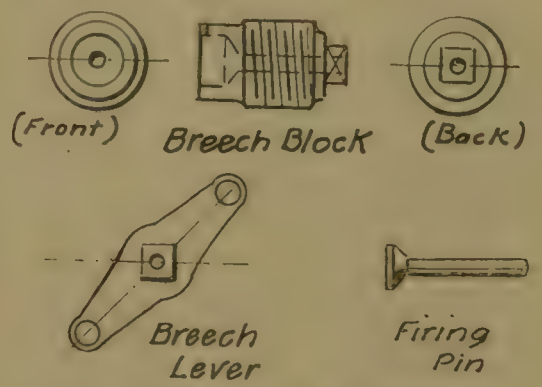


Fig. 6.—Showing the component parts of the breech-block.

the entering ends of the threads should be eased off so that the breech and breech-block engage comfortably. The details of the breech-block are given in Fig. 6, the breech hand lever being of steel with two little bright steel handles, one at each end, to give it a business-like appearance.

The recoil chamber of the prototype is used to conceal the spiral spring actuating the trigger hammer. The chamber is made of light brass tube and fits in a lug cast on the gun-barrel adjacent to the trunnions. Inside the chamber a rounded plunger is fitted, this plunger

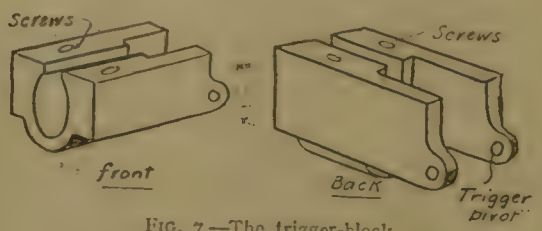


Fig. 7.—The trigger-block.

being fixed to a piece of cycle-spoke wire bent over in the form of a hook at the outer end.

At the breech end of the recoil chamber a block of metal, which may be more clearly described by a perspective sketch (see Fig. 7), is soldered on to the tube. This block of metal is fixed by two screws to the bottom face of the breech. The position of the pivots in the trigger (Fig. 8) locks it in the "set" position, and to fire the gun the trigger is lifted, and when the hook pivot passes the dead point the trigger flies upwards, the hammer head engaging the firing pin in the breech. The firing pin should be made of steel, and having a head like a valve (see Fig. 6), it will prevent the charge passing back through the breech-block to the air.

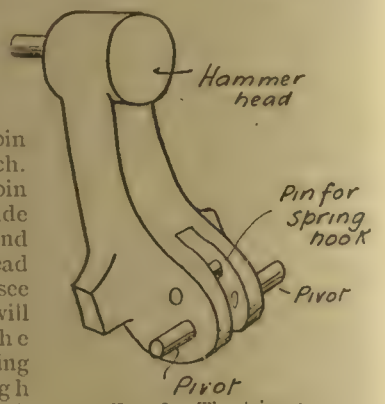


Fig. 8.—The trigger.

The carriage may be built up out of sheet metal, the trunnion end being the widest portion, and also strengthened by blocks of metal or castings at this point. The shield may be made of blue steel, and the lower parts attached by a couple of ordinary brass hinges such as are used in cabinet work.

The sight must be capable of being graduated to the range required. The simplest sight is a

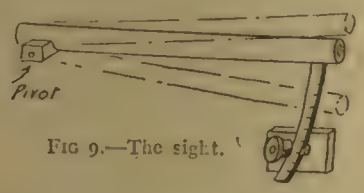


Fig. 9.—The sight.

"telescopic" sight—minus all lenses, of course. A piece of 1/8" tube is mounted so that it will pivot at the shield end and be supported by a curved strip towards the breech end. A small milled screw holds it in the required position (see Fig. 9). The bar may be graduated for distance by careful experiment. A similar manner of holding the gun itself is adopted for the elevating and depressing functions. The end of the trail may be fitted with a spade, as in the actual gun, and also an eye to limber it up to the ammunition carriage, should such an addition be made to the gun at any time.

For a first-class model the wheels are best made in metal, iron, or brass, cast from a wooden pattern. A twelve-spoked model locomotive-wheel casting such as can be obtained from any dealer for a few pence might be made to serve, the flange being turned off.

Competition for December

"CHRISTMAS MESSAGES"

First Prize in Each Class: Goods to the Value of One Guinea. Second Prize in Each Class: A Book by a "Captain" Author. And Twenty Consolation Prizes

CHRISTMAS MESSAGES

If you were sending a Christmas greeting to Sir John French, what would you say? No doubt an appropriate message will occur to you, and we offer the first prize this month to the reader who submits to us what we consider the best message, in not more than fifty words, suitable for one or other of the following:—

Sir John Jellicoe

Sir John French

The Kaiser.

You may select which of these personages you prefer to whom to send your message, but not more than one message must be sent by each competitor.

RULES AND CONDITIONS

1. The name, address, and age of the competitor must be written above his attempt.

2. Competitors will be divided into two classes, comprising those sixteen years of age and over, and those under sixteen respectively.

3. Entries must be received not later than Friday, December 18th, addressed to the Competition Editor, The Captain, 8, Southampton Street, Strand, London, W.C., the words "Christmas Message" being written in the top left-hand corner of the envelope.

4. Winners of the first prize may select goods to the value of one guinea from any firm advertising in The Captain.

5. The Editor's decision must be accepted as final.

COMPETITION RESULTS

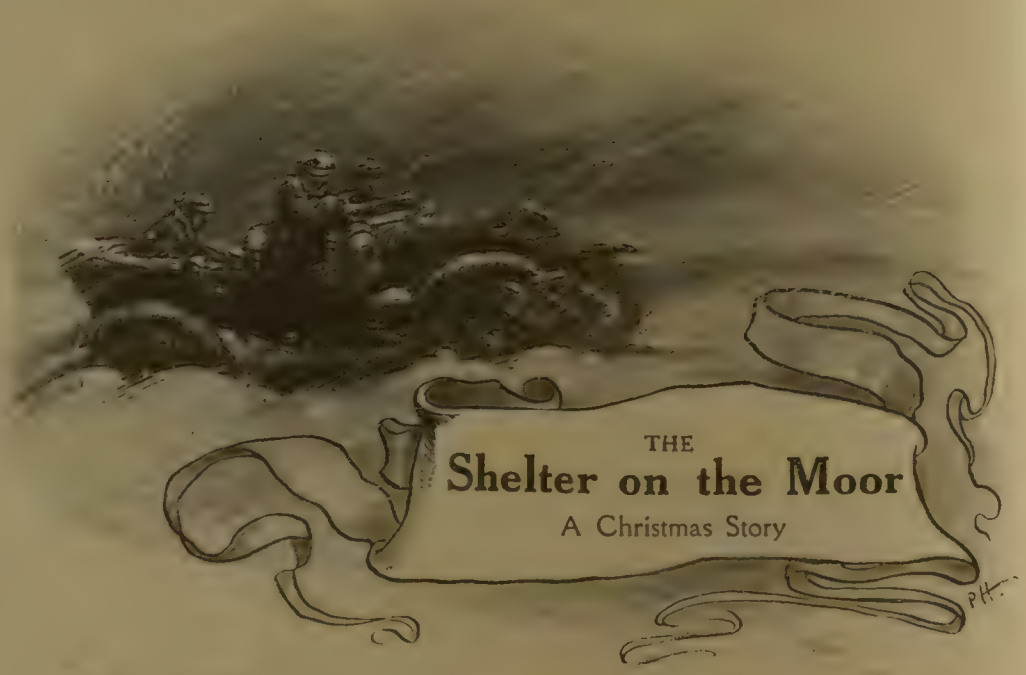
PICTURE PUZZLES

The following are the correct solutions: (1) Fez, (2) Oporto, (3) Aden, (4) Bangkok, (5) Rimini, (6) Barcelona, (7) Gothenburg, (8) Pekin, (9) Chicago, (10) Toronto, (11) Dundee, (12) Calicut, (13) Coolgardie, (14) Edinborough, (15) Frankfort, (16) Milwaukee.

This competition was exceedingly popular, and a few at least of the pictures baffled hundreds of competitors. Nevertheless, eighty-three readers succeeded in solving every one, and we have therefore decided to divide the value of the prizes among them, after adding considerably to the total value of the awards originally announced. The successful competitors, with each of whom we have communicated, are as follows: Harold H. Croasdale, Bristol; Betty Mellanby, Ealing; M. F. Nicholls, Purley; Alfred E. Strouts, Sittingbourne; Ronald K. Colwell, Muswell Hill; Arthur E. Ginn, Enfield; Mabel Baxter, Rochdale; A. N. Finter, Chiswick; John Yearsley, Bournemouth; Helen M. Pennycook, Chiswick; George L. Charlesworth, Dewsbury; Ernest A. Lacey, Paddington; Florence M. Allen, Birkenhead; N. H. Hughman, Cricklewood; K. W. Gould, Hornsey; Cecil E. Abelson, Willesden; Harry M. Burton, Fulham; Vernon Sankey, Oldham; John S. Hodgson, Reigate; R. E. Howe, Hampton Hill; Percy Knowles, Macclesfield; E. H. S. Walters, Primrose Hill; Stewart Parsons, Ilford; W. Wardle, Middlesbrough; G. A. R. Williamson, Croydon; R. G. Peckover, Willesden Green; R. Stringer, Newcastle-on-Tyne; H. A. Coningsby, West Ealing; C. P. Fahy, Clapham; S. Cross, Flixton; Arthur R. Gray, Pollokshields; Eric P. Whiteman, Hornsey; Reginald Bishop, Mill Hill; J. F. Turpie, Sunderland; Charles Vasey New Southgate; H. D. Murray, Kenley; Percy Newton, Hull; Charles Spenle, Wealdstone; William Sever, Crumpsall; Gordon Drummond, Dumfries; H. D. Taylor, Penarth; B. Fullman, London, E.; Arthur Harberd, Dublin; Cyril Strong, Whitley Bay; John Mallam, Rugby; G. Gill, Worcester Park; Percy Booth, Birmingham; J. H. Ewing, Felsted; R. Irving, Bedford; Eleanor Child, Barrow; G. M. Ewing, Guildford; A. Heywood-Waddington, Devonport; A. C. Hill, Stourbridge; David R. R. Burt, Lochraig; Arthur Pepworth, Alderley Edge; Henry Marcus, London, E.; James Burt, Kircaldy; James M. Brodie, Cathcart; H. T. Jones, Beaumaris; John F. MacDonald, Motherwell; Frank Ringwood, Palmer's Green; John R. Burnett, Inveresk; James Stevens, Dundee; Maurice J. Antcliff, Edgbaston; H. Royle, Doncaster; Henry J. Caple, Bath; Leonard C. Soar, Herne Hill; A. Macnaughton, Edinburgh; A. P. Roberts, Watford; G. T. Moss, Ilford; Muriel Pennington, Whitecross; D. Ribbons, East Dulwich; Maurice G. Wells, Buckhurst Hill; Stanley Freeman, Brondesbury; Hilda M. Roberts, West Ferry; F. R. C. Fasdick, Hexham-on-Tyne; H. M. Williams, Barnet; C. F. S. McKenzie, Norbury; Beatrice Mann, Swindon; A. E. C. Davies, Bradford; Lancelot A. Yeomans, Huntingdon; H. I. Frith, King's Norton; J. G. Milner, Hampstead.

POEMS ON OUR FLEET

The results of this competition appear in the "Captain Club" pages.



THE Shelter on the Moor

A Christmas Story

By T. C. BRIDGES **Illustrated by Paul Hardy**

JIM BURTON stood at the window of the breakfast-room at Taw Royal, drumming gently on the frosty panes with his fingers and looking out across the lawn.

Down by the river, a quarter of a mile away, a figure was pottering along, now and then picking up a pebble, and either dropping it or putting it in a bag slung over his back.

"Jove, he's a queer one!" said Jim presently. "I say, Gil, whatever made you ask that chap here for Christmas?"

Gilbert Vivian looked up from the paper in which he was deeply engrossed.

"Queer?" he repeated. "Who's queer? What's up?"

"Jonah, you juggins. I'm talking about Jonah. What made you collect him for your Christmas party?"

"I didn't. It was father. Jonah's father, Major Janion, is a pal of dad's. He's gone to the front, and Jonah's got nobody else to go to, so Dad asked him here."

"I see. All right. Then I must try to be decent to him. But it's a bit of a struggle."

"I know. You can't do much with a chap that doesn't shoot or play footer and can't skate, and cares for nothing but mugging around with a geological hammer and a bag and collecting a lot of footling pebbles."

The clock began to strike nine as he spoke, and, punctual to the minute, the butler came in with the hot dishes.

"Hurray!" said Gilbert. "Here's brekker. Is the governor down, Searle?"

"Yes, sir. He was on the stairs as I came through the hall."

As he spoke the door opened and a tall, hard-bitten man of fifty entered the room.

"Morning, Jim. Morning, Gil. What's the news—another battle?"

"No, sir. The paper's fearfully dull. Not a word of news in it except about the escape of some spy chap from Tarnmouth."

"Spy—what, a German?"

"Suppose so. Kunkl his name is. They seem to think he's a tough nut, for they've sent a lot of men out to run him down. They say he's the fellow who tried to blow up Taviton Bridge last August."

"They'd no business to let him go," growled Mr. Vivian. "They're a great deal too slack. What'll you have, Jim—kidneys or eggs and bacon?"

The rest of the party drifted in—Gilbert's young brother and sister, then Mrs. Vivian, and, last of all, George Janion, his hands showing signs of hasty washing. He was a heavily built youth of sixteen, with a sort of unfinished look

about him. His rather good blue eyes gazed through glasses, and his clothes never looked as though they had been made for him.

"I—I'm sorry I'm so late," he stammered, getting rather red.

"All right, George; plenty left. Have an egg?" said Mr. Vivian, trying to put the boy at his ease. "Find any fossils this morning?"

"There are no fossils here, sir. The moor is all granite," answered Janion gravely. "I was looking for specimens of tin ore."

"Such a nuisance!" broke in Mrs. Vivian, looking up from a letter. "Carters have blundered about those things I ordered for Christmas Day. And to-morrow's Christmas Eve. There's no time to write again. I shall have to send the car to Tarnmouth."

"I can't spare Berry, my dear," said Mr. Vivian. "I have to go to Ashampton to-day to the District Council meeting."

"Then what shall I do? I must have the things," said Mrs. Vivian in evident distress.

"All right, mother," put in Gilbert quickly. "I'll take the old car in and bring the things for you. Are you game, Jim?"

"Rather! It'll be jolly."

"Very well," said Mr. Vivian; "that will be the best plan. You'd better start early, boys. The glass is falling, and I expect there'll be snow before night."

"We'll go at once, father," said Gilbert, as he finished his cup of coffee and got up.

Five minutes later the sound of a motor-horn was heard at the front door.

Mr. Vivian came out.

"Gil, I wish you'd take George. He wants to go and do some shopping."

Gil's face fell slightly, but he made no objection.

"And," added his father in a whisper, "make him get his hair cut. It's most shockingly long."

"All right, father. Tell him to hurry."

Janion appeared in a long black overcoat which contrasted oddly with the smart check ulsters of the other two. He got in at the back, and, amid shouted farewells, they drove off.

Though the car was old she had plenty of power, and Gilbert knew her well. She made light of the hilly moorland roads, and they covered the twenty-four miles to Tarnmouth in just over seventy minutes.

"What time will you be going back, please?" asked Janion as they got out in the Royal garage.

"We'll start about two," said Gilbert. "Meet us for lunch in the hotel at one."

"Thank you very much, but I have a good deal to do," answered Janion. "I think I will get a sandwich and meet you here at two."

"Rather beastly to say so, but I'm glad he hasn't tacked himself on to our coat-tails," said Jim Burton, as he and Gil strolled up George Street.

Gilbert laughed.

"I only hope he won't forget to have his hair cut. He wouldn't look half so queer if he took a little care of his appearance. Dad wanted to give him a new suit as a Christmas present, but the beggar wouldn't have it. He's awfully hard up, I believe."

"I rather admire his independence," said Jim, with a laugh. "Hullo, here's Carter's. Let's go and do your mater's commissions."

They did. They also did some for themselves, and then adjourned to the Royal for lunch.

Sharp at two they were back in the yard.

"No sign of Jonah," said Jim, looking round.

"Wish he'd hurry up," said Gilbert, with a rather anxious glance at the sky. "It's getting quite dark. Dad said it was going to snow, and I believe it is."

"You get it pretty thick up on the moor, I should think."

"You bet. It's generally a regular snorter when it does come."

"Hulloa, here he is," he went on, as Jonah, with a large, untidy brown-paper parcel in his arms, came scurrying into the yard.

Five minutes later they were clear of the town and breasting the first hill.

"Jove, it looks gloomy!" observed Jim, looking round. "Wind's getting up, too. Sou'-east. What d'ye make o' that, Gil?"

"Blizzard," answered Gilbert laconically, and opened the throttle a thought wider.

They were ten miles out and climbing Devil's Peak when the first flakes began to fall—fine stuff, hard frozen, that cut their faces like a sand-blast. They were running right into it.

When they reached the top it was coming down so thick they could hardly see twenty yards, and the wind was cruel.

"Shove her along, Gil," said Jim, pulling his coat collar closer round his chin.

"Can't do it, old man. She's skidding frightfully. Gently does the trick."

Jim said no more. He realised that Gil was right.

Presently Gilbert had to come down to second speed. Though Jim kept on clearing the screen, the snow was blinding. Already everything was white, and drifts were piling rapidly in every hollow.

Up here on the top of the moor there were no hedges or walls. There was nothing to guide by, nothing to stop the full sweep of the tremendous gale. Its weight was so great that the car ran as though all the brakes were on. Every little slope brought her down to first speed.

"Phew, but it's cold!" muttered Jim. "How are you making it, Jonah?"

"All right, thanks, but I don't believe you'll ever get up Riddon."

"Don't croak," retorted Jim. "Wait till we get there."

"Believe he's right all the same," said Gilbert. "We've got no chains, and she's skidding like a cat on walnut shells."

Riddon was one in five—the worst hill on any main road in the South. Gil sent her at it with a rush. She got as far as the steepest part, then checked. The driving wheels spun, but could get no grip.

"Look out! She's running back," cried Jim.

Gilbert clapped on the brakes. It was no use. The car started slithering back like a toboggan, and to save a smash Gil ditched her.

"Now we've done it," said Jim, as he jumped out. "Yes, the near side driving wheel's gone in."

"We'll have to hoof it—that's all," replied Gilbert.

"What, and leave her here?"

"Nothing else for it. There's no help nearer than Taviton, and that is seven miles away."

"How far are we from home?"

"About nine miles," said Gilbert, as he picked up his mother's parcel. "Come on, you chaps."

Nine miles would have been nothing to any of them in ordinary weather. In this storm it was no joke. When they got to the top of Riddon the wind was like a wall, and the snow so thick they could hardly see one another.

"Keep close," said Gilbert. "Once off the road we'd never find it again."

"What have you got there, Jonah?" he continued, noticing that Janion was panting under his great bundle.

"Just some things I got in Tarnmouth. They'd have been spoilt if I'd left them in the car."

"Strikes me you'll have had enough of 'em before we get back," said Gil drily.

After that no one talked at all. They had no breath for it. For an hour they struggled along, heads bent to the blast. By this time the drifts were waist deep, and the storm was growing worse rather than better. Also it was fast getting dark.

They were going down a steep hill when Jim's foot slipped, and he took a regular header into the drifting snow.

"Hold up, old hoss," said Gilbert as he helped him up. "Hulloa—damaged?"

"Twisted my ankle a bit. It's all right. Go ahead."

But it was not all right. Jim was limping badly, and when they got to the bridge at the bottom he pulled up and leaned against the parapet.

"I'm sorry, Gil, but I'm all in. I've sprained my ankle."

"That's a bore," said Gilbert, concealing his dismay by pretending to take it lightly. "We'll have to carry you."

"Rot! You couldn't get me half a mile. You two go on, and I'll wait here till you can send someone for me."

"Wait here! Why, you'd freeze stiff in ten minutes. No, we must tote you on to some sor of shelter. There's a cottage at Hollow Hill a couple of miles farther on."

"There's a shelter nearer than that," said Janion.

"Is there? Where?" demanded Gilbert, in surprise.

"An old mine house. It's up the brook, not much more than a quarter of a mile. I spotted it last Tuesday when I was up here looking for amethysts."

"Anyone live there?"

"I don't think so. There wasn't any smoke."

"It's shelter, anyhow," said Gil. "What d'ye think, Jim?"

"Any port in a snowstorm," answered Jim. "But it's going to be a job to get there."

It was bad enough on the road. Off it, the whole three were waist deep at once. And, to make matters worse, they had almost to carry Jim. He could hardly put any weight on his left foot.

The ground was fearfully rough, and the snow hid the gullies and boulders. Their only guide was the line of running water, jet black against the snow, and as the banks of the brook were fearfully boggy this made the going not only difficult but positively dangerous.

"See anything of your mine-house, Jonah?" gasped Gilbert, after they had been wallowing along for what seemed an age.

"Not far now," answered Jonah, who was blowing hard. "There's a bend above us, and the house is just beyond it."

He spoke with a certainty that surprised

Gil. It was a contrast to Jonah's usual hesitating manner. They pushed on again, and sure enough came to the bend.

"Hurray, I see it!" said Jim, as a dark object loomed up through the hissing storm.

"'Bout time, too," observed Gil. "Jove, it's something to get a bit of shelter from this wind! Where's the door, Jonah?"

"The other side, I think. Wait, and I'll see."

He plunged off, leaving the others leaning against the wall under lee of the building.

"Regular old ruin, Jim," said Gilbert. "Windows boarded up. Only hope we shall find something to make a fire."

"It's shelter, anyhow, Gil. It was precious lucky Jonah remembered it. We should have been in the soup if we'd had to go on to Hollow Hill. Hulloa, here he is back!"

"Did you find the door, Jonah?"

"'Sh! There's someone there," said Jonah in a low voice.

"What luck!" exclaimed Gilbert. "Come on."

"Steady," said Jonah, grabbing Gilbert by the arm. "I don't like the look of the chap inside."

"Don't like the look of him—why, what d'ye mean?"

"He's a foreigner," said Jonah, impressively.

"Man alive, he won't eat us."

Gilbert scraped the snow away cautiously and peered through into the room, where the foreigner sat writing rapidly.

"But he might shoot us," answered Jonah.

Gilbert laughed contemptuously.

"He's got a pistol," said Jonah, still holding on to the other's arm.

"A pistol. How d'ye know?"

"I looked through the window. Come and see."

"All right. Wait here a minute, Jim."

Gilbert gasped for breath as, rounding the corner, they met the full force of the storm.

"Here's the window," said Jonah, pointing to a boarded opening. "There's a slit at the bottom."

Gilbert scraped the snow away cautiously and peered through into a long narrow room, which must have been the kitchen of the old mine house. A fire of turf glowed dully on the open hearth. At a table made of two planks laid upon trestles a man sat upon an old packing case, writing busily. His light was a candle stuck in a bottle.

As Jonah had said, a pistol lay close at his hand. Gil, who knew something about fire-arms, recognised it as a Browning, the pet tool of the Anarchist.

It was not the pistol, but the man himself that arrested Gil's attention. He was short, but enormously broad, and his head was huge. His bald crown was surrounded with a thick fringe of rusty red hair, and his bristling eye-brows were of the same colour.

As Gilbert watched, the man raised his head, showing a great hooked nose and deep-set, glittering eyes.

Gilbert dropped back.

"Jonah—Jonah, it's Kunkl," he whispered.

"Kunkl—who's Kunkl?"

"The German spy—the chap I was reading about in the paper this morning. There was a picture of him. He hooked it from the concentration camp at Fort Wisden."

"I heard about him in Tarnmouth," said Jonah gravely. "They say he's desperate. I expect he'll shoot if we knock."

"I'm jolly sure he will. But we can't leave Jim out in this."

Jonah nodded sagely.

"No; we shall all freeze if we don't get into the house. We must turn the chap out."

"Turn him out! How are we going to do that? We haven't a gun."

"N-no. But I think we can manage," said Jonah. "Let's get back out of this a minute."

Gil followed him round to the lee side of the building. It was a relief to get out of the full force of the gale.

"How is it, Gil?" asked Jim. "Who's the chap with the gun?"

"It's Kunkl, the German spy fellow. Ugliest-looking brute you ever saw. Got a Browning handy, and I'll lay he'll shoot at sight."

"Cheery look-out," said Jim, whose teeth were chattering. "Don't mind telling you that I can't stick this much longer. I'm just about freezing."

"Jonah says he has a tip to get the beggar out"

"Jonah?

"I don't know whether I can," said Jonah, rather nervously. As he spoke he was busy just under the wall, untying the big parcel which he had managed to hang on to all this time. "But I thought we might manage with some of these," he continued.

"What on earth have you got there?" demanded Gilbert.

"Some blasting cartridges. Just gelignite, you know. I got them to burst some of those big boulders—the ones with quartz crystals in them."

"Never mind what you got 'em for. What are you going to do with them?" said Gil.

"I thought if we fired a couple on the window-sill, the spy chap would probably come out. He'd think someone was shooting at him. Then if we two stood close by the door, one on each side, we might manage to collar him."

"Not a bad scheme!" declared Gil. "But I say, Jonah, are you game to tackle the chap? He's a big brute and he's armed."

"Oh, I'm pretty strong," answered Jonah, modestly.

"All right. Fix up the cartridges. The sooner we start the better. If we stick here much longer we shall be too stiff to handle the chap."

"And I'm out of it," growled Jim. "All the same," he added, hopefully, "perhaps I can help to sit on him."

Jonah evidently knew what he was about. He had the cartridges ready in a very short time, and all three went round to the front. The gale was raging as furiously as ever, and between the darkness and the snow they could hardly see their hands before their faces.

Jonah felt for the window and set the cartridges in position. It was a job to light the match, but they managed it at last. There was no danger of Kunkl seeing them, for the slit was all snowed up again.

"All right," said Jonah, breathlessly, as the fire began to spit. "You go the far side, Gil."

The two plunged away towards the door. Jim hobbled up behind Gilbert.

They had barely taken their places when there was a loud report which rose high above the

shriek of the storm. It was followed instantly by a second.

There came a crash from inside as the table went flying. The door burst open and the burly figure of the German shot out.

Jonah and Gilbert reached him together. Jonah jumped on his back. Gil, a Rugger man, collared him low. Down all three went together in the deep snow, fighting like cats.

The spy was enormously strong. He hit out savagely with his great fists, and a chance blow got Gilbert on the side of the head, half stunning him.

Kunkl, feeling Gilbert's hold relax, began to struggle up.

"Jim! Help! Hold his pistol arm!" gasped Jonah.

Jim flung himself into the fray, and seizing Kunkl's right arm wrenched it back so sharply that the pistol flew out of his hand, and vanished in the drift.

"*Verdomte schelm!*" roared Kunkl, and whirling round caught Jim with his left fist, sending him flying backwards through the doorway. He fell with his damaged ankle under him, and the pain was so sharp that he turned giddy and faint.

It was some seconds before he struggled up, and then he had a dazed feeling that it was all up. Jonah must be finished by this time.

Clinging to the door-post, he scrambled up on one leg. The snow was whirling in a white flurry through the open door, and through the flying drift he heard a deep gasping groan. Setting his teeth, he hopped outside.

"It's all right. I've got him. Lend me a handkerchief."

Jim could hardly believe his ears. The voice was Jonah's. There was a moment's lull between gusts, and behold Jonah kneeling on the big German's chest! The latter, flat on his back, was almost buried in the drift.

Gilbert loomed up through the smother.

"All right, Jim. Stay where you are. I've got a handkerchief. Here you are, Jonah. You tie his hands. I'll see to his legs."

Two minutes later they had dragged Kunkl inside and closed the door.

"How in the world did you do it, Jonah?" demanded Jim, staring at Jonah with new-found respect.

"I didn't; it was you. When he turned to hit you, that gave me the chance to get hold of him. Then it was easy enough. I just held him by the throat."

"You certainly did," said Gill with a chuckle, as he stirred the fire. "He hasn't come round yet. I say, there's a reward offered for him. Fifty pounds, I believe it is. That'll keep you in pocket-money for a term or two, Jonah."

Jonah considered a moment.

"That will be £16 13*s.* 4*d.* apiece," he announced.

"It won't," answered Gilbert. "It's all yours, my son."

"You did just as much as me," began Jonah indignantly, but Gilbert cut him short.

"Don't argue. Stick some more turf on the fire. And Jim get off your boot, and I'll bandage that ankle for you. Won't do to have you lame for Christmas."

"It's something to have a Christmas to look forward to at all," said Jim with a laugh. "If it hadn't been for good old Jonah we should most likely have missed it altogether."

THE END

"Ready—*Eye*—Ready!"

Books for Christmas Reading

By A "CAPTAIN" REVIEWER

THE outbreak of war has had a very considerable effect upon the books published for boys this Christmas, and the fellow who makes a point of not parting with his money until he has gazed long and lovingly at all the different titles arrayed on the bookseller's shelves—nor before, perchance, he has skimmed through the opening chapters of a dozen or so—is likely to discover that the usual afternoon he devotes to his labour of love will require a good deal of filling up with some other amusement. For our good friends the publishers have reduced very considerably the number of books they have produced, and have pursued the very wise policy of issuing only the very best of the stories they have at their command.

Consequently, although the book-hunter will have fewer books from which to choose this Christmas, he will not be hampered in his task by a number of second-raters, and he will be able to concentrate his attention on securing the very best of the best. Here he will have plenty of scope for the exercise of his judgment, for many a fine point will have to be decided by his wisdom. Year by year an all-round improvement in the progress of boys' books is seen, and this unhappy year has seen no decline in that respect at least. All the modern inventions for obtaining super-excellence in results of colour-engraving, printing, and binding have been utilised to make the volumes issued by the best houses more attractive than ever they have been.

I am very gratified to see that the publishers have paid THE CAPTAIN a very high compliment by putting in the very foreground in this time of stress the work of CAPTAIN authors. It not only shows the popularity of the stories that have appeared as serials in this magazine, but is also the most convincing evidence that the Old Fag allows only the very best of boys' authors to contribute to his pages. Few books, indeed, have been published this year that have been written by men who have not had stories in the finest magazine for boys. It is not as though one publisher made a point of publishing CAPTAIN stories; the whole trade compete to secure the rights to issue them, and almost without exception they make a tale by a CAPTAIN author their star production among books for boys this season. Glance for a moment at these great names in the publishing world—Messrs. Henry Frowde, Hodder & Stoughton, A. & C. Black, James Nesbit, S. W. Partridge, who have all, among others, just issued a book by a regular CAPTAIN contributor. Herbert Strang, Frederick Watson, Warren Bell, Gunby Hadath, T. C. Bridges, and Percy F. Westerman have written books that will delight British boys throughout the kingdom this Christmas.

War stories, of course, rule the day. Herbert Strang has given us a clinker in **"A Hero of Liège,"** whose hero, Kenneth Amory, happens to be in Cologne on the eve of the declaration of war. Thrown into prison as a spy, on information given by a German named Hellwig, whom he has offended, he contrives to escape with an English companion, makes off with a Taube monoplane, and flies by night across the frontier. The two young Britons arrive near Liège, only to find themselves in danger of being shot as

spies, from which peril they are saved at the last moment by Remi Pariset, a lieutenant in the Belgian Flying Corps, who afterwards joins Amory in frustrating a plan of Hellwig's to blow up a certain bridge. Joining the Belgian Army, temporarily, as an airman, Amory is engaged in several thrilling expeditions—the destruction of a bridge, a fight with a Zeppelin, the blowing up of German siege guns, and finally has an exciting adventure in an armoured motor-car. Several incidents in the siege are graphically related, and the story gives one an excellent picture of events during the early days of this gigantic war. Some splendid illustrations by Cyrus Cuneo add much to the value of this book, which will take its place among the best that Herbert Strang has given us. It is issued at 3*s.* 6*d.* by Messrs. Henry Frowde, Hodder & Stoughton.

Nobody can write a better story of adventure in the air or on the high seas than Percy F. Westerman, whose tale **"The Dreadnought of the Air"** is one of many good books that Messrs. S. W. Partridge are producing. The price is 6*s.*, and very good money's worth it is. The splendid colour illustrations by Mr. Fleming Williams at once show the almost casual observer what an exciting story the author has to tell, and those Captainites who get the book will find that of the four hundred pages it comprises very few indeed are allowed to pass without something thrilling being recorded. Mr. Westerman glories in mysterious airships, stolen plans, wrecks, and hazardous enterprises, and as his literary ability is only equalled by his technical knowledge, his stories are always as instructive as they are entertaining. He never allows his imagination to get the better of his common sense, and although the hero of this yarn has plenty of daring work to do, Mr. Westerman sees to it that he does it always in a humanly conceivable way. No intelligent fellow finds pleasure in reading a story wherein the characters get out of difficult situations by impossible means, and that is why all Percy F. Westerman's books are so highly appreciated. "The Dreadnought of the Air" is a volume that most of you will revel in; it is good stuff right through.

"Sea Scouts of the Petrel" (3*s.* 6*d.*) is another book by Mr. Westerman which Messrs. A. & C. Black have just issued. It contains plenty of fun and adventure, and younger readers will appreciate it immensely.

"The Last of his Line" has so recently been concluded in serial form in these pages that any criticism of it is entirely unnecessary. It proved as popular a story as ever we have had the privilege of offering to our readers. Gunby Hadath has now won for himself a place in the very front rank of writers of school stories, and he is a Captainite heart and soul, for since we published his first short story three or four years ago he has offered us every single boy's story that has come from his pen. His Foozle yarns have been collected into book form by Messrs. A. & C. Black, Messrs. Nisbet produced "Conquering Claybury," and now Messrs. Partridge have published his latest serial at 6*s.* Ernest Prater has contributed several illustrations in colour to the book, which is enclosed in a very effective coloured wrapper designed by Stanley L. Wood, both well-known CAPTAIN artists. I am very glad indeed to see the story of Penn so magnificently produced, and I am certain that a great number of you will want to give it a prominent place on your bookshelves. And if you would like another book of Gunby Hadath's you should get **"Never Say Die!"** a real good school yarn, which Messrs Partridge publish at 2*s.* 6*d.* Mr. Hadath's list of books seems likely to become so long, and they are all of such unusual merit, that he will soon be recognised as the modern Talbot Baines Reed.

Two books that are bound to attract a lot of attention this year on account of their naval and military atmosphere are **"Ian Hardy, Midshipman,"** and **"Jack Scarlett, Sandhurst Cadet,"** both of which are published by Messrs. Seeley, Service & Co., at 5*s.* each. The first-named is by Commander E. Hamilton Currey, R.N., and those who remember his story of the same Ian Hardy when he was merely a naval cadet are sure to make every effort to read the adventures of the hero when a midshipman. Commander Currey writes so fascinatingly that we should be by no means displeased if he continues narrating the career of young Hardy until he becomes an admiral, an honour which a youngster of his pluck and sagacity will scarcely be able to evade. Next year, we are given to understand, Ian Hardy will appear as a senior midshipman, and we shall be surprised, and certainly disappointed, if he has not contrived to have had many a good smack at the German Fleet, which at the time of writing is still indulging in its long rest-cure at Wilhelmshaven.

"Jack Scarlett" is by Major Alan M. Boisragon, and is a somewhat old-fashioned tale of school and military college life. The end of it

tells how Jack Scarlett got his commission in the Royal Blarney Slashers in May, 187—, the exact date having apparently been blue-pencilled by the Censor. There are many interesting things about Jack Scarlett and the fellows around him, and his college life was a long way from being unexciting, even though his adventures ran on somewhat conventional lines. Numerous illustrations in colour add largely to the attractiveness of the book.

"Muckle John" (A. & C. Black, 3*s.* 6*d.*) will be remembered as one of the most powerful short serials THE CAPTAIN has published. Mr. Frederick Watson has since added very largely to the adventures of the delightful soldier of fortune, and Captainites who get this book will have the double delight of renewing an old acquaintanceship and learning still further of his history. Mr. Watson's book is a perfect model of what a story for boys should be; it is written in faultless style, the characters are cleverly conceived and admirably drawn, and in spite of a ceaseless stream of independent adventures, the main plot of the tale is never obscured. It is only very occasionally that we read a story at the close of which we feel a genuine and poignant regret at being compelled to bid farewell to the principal character, but Mr. Watson has made Muckle John so much our companion, and passes him so gently and artistically into that regretful land where all our heroes of romance dwell half forgotten, that it is with a true sorrow that our fingers slowly close the book which has introduced us to so wholly lovable a man. "Unseen to any, Muckle John had stolen softly away, playing as he went, passing like a shadow, or a dream, or a memory, into that vast darkness. Day stood for a space catching the lingering notes of it, and then it was gathered into the night, and became part of the sea, of the wind, and the soft song of the nestling heath, and so was gone. And that was the last of Muckle John."

The last of Muckle John? Surely not, Mr. Watson; the end of his story, maybe, but Muckle John is made of such stuff that, while he lived, never a day would pass but we fain would hear of him. Can you not follow him again and overtake him, and let him sing, and fight, and play for us once more?

Among books for girls published this season one of the first places must go to **"Headmistress Hilary,"** by Kathlyn Rhodes, whose previous stories—notably "Schoolgirl Honour" and "Dodo's Schooldays"—have convinced many of the fair sex that, contrary to their previous belief, tales of girls' school life can be made as jolly and as full of adventure and sturdy sentiment as boys' stories, which so many girls read in preference. Headmistress Hilary is new to St. Anne's School, and her reception by a certain section of the girls is far from cordial. How she eventually wins the regard and affection of all it is the chief aim of the story to tell, and in the course of the narrative several exciting scenes and incidents occur, told with a skill that compels one's attention. Many minor adventures in school, on the hockey field, and elsewhere, are, of course, also related, and Arthur Twidle has contributed some excellent illustrations in colour. The book is issued at 3*s.* 6*d.* by James Nisbet & Co.

From the same house, and at the same price, comes a book by another CAPTAIN author, T. C. Bridges, who, in **"A Fight for Fortune,"** has written a tale of exciting adventures in the China Seas, where the two heroes seek and ultimately find a certain lagoon, from whose depths vast wealth in the form of pearls is to be obtained—but only after great hardships and thrilling perils have been experienced by the plucky adventurers. This volume is also well illustrated by coloured drawings.

Among volumes to engage one's more studious moments may be mentioned **"Geology of To-day,"** by Dr. J. W. Gregory, F.R.S. (Seeley, Service & Co., 5*s.*), and **"The Boy's Book of Astronomy,"** by Ellison Hawks (Grant Richards, 6*s.*), concerning which we have space only to say that they impart in simple language, with plenty of helpful illustrations, the elements of the sciences with which they deal.

"Herbert Strang's Annual" is a volume which few Captainites can fail to enjoy, for, as usual, it contains some of the best work of their favourite authors, including Desmond Coke, Gunby Hadath, Captain Gilson, John S. Martin, as well as Herbert Strang; and illustrations by T. M. R. Whitwell, H. M. Brock, Stanley L. Wood, and many other well-known artists. The articles cover, among other subjects, "High-Speed Telegraphy," "Waterloo," "The Motor-Boat," "Priests' Holes and Hiding-Places," and "Some New Developments in Shipping"; and there are eight splendid coloured plates. The price is 5*s.*

SOUTHAMPTON STREET, STRAND, LONDON

Good luck to you all this Christmas, all you boys and Old Boys who do me the honour of reading this magazine; to those Old Boy friends of mine who have gone in their hundreds to serve their King and Country in the Empire's hour of peril, especially good luck. I know there is not a single one of you who does not wish he were old and strong enough to take his place in the trenches, to make just one of those million men whom Lord Kitchener requires. I know that in scores and scores of cases Captainites who could just pass the recruiting officer by standing erect and declaring in a firm voice that they were "just nineteen" are now gaily wearing His Majesty's khaki—may they be spared to wear it till that glorious day when the soldiers shall march proudly home again; while the ringing cheers of a grateful nation drown the thunder of their tramping feet—and I know that many a younger kid is envying the brother who had the good luck to be born three years before him. All our hearts and all our hopes are across the Channel, or on that narrow strip of ocean where vigilantly patrol our ships of war.

Sikhs with a machine gun in France.

Like the nation itself, THE CAPTAIN was born midst the disturbances of war. Our first volume was but just approaching completion when the peace we had come to love so well was broken in South Africa; long before the first year of our life had been completed thousands of young British lives had been lost. Then, as now, public schools loyally responded to the call. Too long, and yet not one name begrudged, is the list in many a school of the heroes who fell on the veldt. The lists may be longer still, alas!

when the toll of this war is taken, the war which must blacken the story of Time. But every name will be written in letters of glory, and into the eyes of those who read for ever afterwards will well the tears of pride.

Lord Kitchener does not want old men in glasses whose hand is strong enough to hold no more distinctive a weapon than a pen, but Lord Kitchener has called many a young man from my staff; willingly have they gone, and heartily have I wished them God-speed and a safe return. My office is a quiet place now, even though ever and again through the open window comes the stirring sound of the marching song of soldiers swinging down the Strand; seldom does the door open to admit the visitor who is always welcome, the man who has done good work with pen or pencil for you and me. CAPTAIN contributors are in the main young men, and I am proud to know that their feet are set on the road the feet of all young men should tread — the road of honour, the paths where lurk the enemies of the King. Had I not always made it a practice to keep by me more stories by our best authors than I immediately required I should be in a sorry plight just now, and you would be complaining that there were too many new names in the old mag. Artists, too, have deserted the easel to have a slap instead at the hated eagle; Howard Elcock has gone, and John Cameron, and Ernest Blaikley too. Captain G. A. Hope now and again drops me a cheery note to say that all is well with him and his artillery, and personally I shall be surprised f before very long *Captain* Hope doesn't . . . but I'm giving no secrets away just now. Captain Gilson has been in the thick of the fighting at Antwerp and Ghent and Bruges, and I know that the experiences he went through will provide him with material for some splendid CAPTAIN stories when once again he has the leisure to write them. Of the doings of other CAPTAIN writers I cannot at the moment speak; but when the war is over, I shall get them all to gather round and tell me their personal reminiscences, which in due course I shall narrate to you. Here once again, then, is "Good luck to them!" and "A Happy Christmas to you all!" wherever it may be spent.

Topical.

German boy scouts, who have been employed in large numbers by the German army during its operations in Belgium.

THE GERMAN SPY AT WORK

1. Signalling with the sails of a windmill. 2. Using the hands of a clock, semaphore fashion, to send information. 3. Releasing carrier-pigeons bearing messages as to the movements of the Allied troops. 4. Passing sentries in the disguise of a British officer. 5. Posing as a peasant and lighting signal-fires at night.

ANSWERS TO CORRESPONDENTS

F. H. D. (Finchley).—Those who excel at ventriloquism doubtless have some special aptitude for the art, but a certain amount of skill in it can be acquired by most people who think it worth the necessary patience and practice. A book on the subject is issued at a shilling by Messrs. L. Upcott Gill, Bazaar Buildings, Drury Lane, London, W.C.

Jim (Sidcup).—The button, which has been returned to you by post, belongs to the Royal Irish Regiment. The motto "*Virtutis Namurcensis Praemium*" may be translated "Reflect on Namur, the reward of valour," and commemorates the valiant conduct of this regiment at the siege and capture of Namur by William of Orange in 1695. The Latin is not irreproachable, and as the second word was misspelt on the button you sent it is not surprising that it puzzled you.

H. G. B. (Henley-in-Arden).—Thanks for your poem. It is not bad, but poetry must be very good to find its way into THE CAPTAIN, especially just now when space is so precious.

Jack.—A torpedo is quite as wonderful a piece of mechanism as you have been told. It is from 14ft. to about 20ft. long, the breadth at the thickest part being about one-twelfth the length. It has its own little engine-room towards the rear, the motive power being compressed air at a pressure of 1,350lbs. to the square inch. It has two screw-propellers, and horizontal and vertical rudders, while the balance chamber contains very ingenious balancing and steering apparatus, including a gyroscope working at great speed. In the fore part of the torpedo is the charge of gun-cotton, fired by means of a kind of pistol fitted to the nose of the projectile.

Mary (Cambridge).—I have had many curious letters from Captainites, but I can't recall previously receiving one begun in July and finished in October. Anyway, I congratulate you on finding the original document and not having to start again. A few weeks ago I dictated half of a long letter to an assistant one night before hurrying away to catch a train, and in the morning I had to begin it again, for the assistant had enlisted. I suppose the little tour through the Black Forest that you mention in the earlier part of the letter didn't come off? No, I don't *think* the Kaiser will be found aboard the first Zeppelin that attempts the non-stop run to London.

P. D. (Plymouth).—I have no quarrel with the German language—in its own place; but no language with which I am acquainted compares in my opinion with English, either for prose or poetry.

Fourteen next Christmas. No, I cannot tell you where the *Iron Duke* is to be found at present, for the Censor wouldn't let me even if I knew. So I am afraid you must bear yourself in patience for a time before your desire to "go over" Admiral Jellicoe's flagship can be realised.

C. L. (Newcastle).—As you will have seen, we are making a special feature of war pictures just now. Some more will be published next month.

A. R. B. (Rugby).—Your little story is not badly written for a beginner, but the plot has one or two rather serious defects. These I have indicated in pencil on the manuscript, which has been returned to you by post.

Acknowledgments and thanks are also due to: **B. Reynolds, S. A. W.** (Grimsby), **"Cruiser," T. Day, A. F. F.** (Harwich), **G. W.** (Aberystwyth), and **"Artillery."**

THE OLD FAG.

The least loved "waits" of all.

AN AIR FIGHT OVER FLANDERS

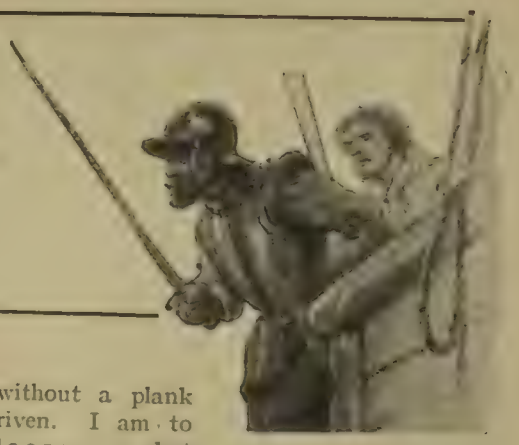
Four German aeroplanes, attempting a raid over the Allies lines, were met by two British and two French machines, and by skilful manœuvring were decoyed into a favourable position for the guns of the Allies, which then opened fire and brought down all four of the Taube machines.

With a shout of triumph Colin whipped the lost ring from the finger of the Spaniard whom he had defeated, just as an English cheer proclaimed that the ship was taken.

THE QUEEN'S RING

A Story of the Great Armada

:: By ALFRED JUDD ::



"Spirits of old-world heroes wake
By river and cove and hoe;
Grenville, Hawkins, Raleigh, Drake,
And a thousand more we know!"

CHAPTER I

COLIN HEARS OF THE RING

"LAND on the larboard bow!"

The *Swallow*, fastest of craft, careened to the slight breeze of the late afternoon, the tropic sun glimmering on the swivels in her gun-ports. An Elizabethan sloop-of-war, the *Swallow* was out to the Indies on a special mission for Drake himself.

Colin Hartley, the captain's son, in a trim velvet hat with a plume of orange, hurried to the larboard waist, and here presently his father joined him.

"So the end's in sight, lad!" cried the elder, as he lowered his telescope. "That far bank of greenness is Palm Tree Island without a doubt—and there lies the treasure of our quest."

"Treasure!" echoed Colin, his eyes suddenly gleaming. "Then it is indeed true——"

"Sail on the larboard quarter!"

This cry from the look-out for'ard cut in on Colin's question, and forthwith all attentions were diverted from the sight of new land to the sight of huge, bellying poles of sail which had borne up on the bright horizon of the sou'-east.

"A galleon, as I live, sir—a galleon!" cried old Abel Storm. "The Dons are abroad and have the scent of us! I'll warrant they've a shrewd eye for our parentage!"

Whereupon, from the score or so of English throats there broke out a ringing cheer.

"A fight—a fight!" roared they; but Captain Hartley's brows were hard in a frown.

"Make your souls easy, lads," voiced he; "there will be no fight to-day if I can have the guiding of it. I am sworn to Sir Francis Drake—and indeed to my Lord Howard—that this sloop shall win safely back to Plymouth without a plank riven. I am to loose no shot save in self-defence; and therefore, lads, my duty at this moment is to run."

There was the lowest murmur of disappointment, but to this the captain paid no heed.

"Trim our tops'ls," ordered he, "and keep our course well up to nor'ard of yonder isle, so that we may pass behind it. Storm, I must needs go to my cabin a spell, so that I leave you in charge. See that my wish is well carried out. Colin, lad, be sharp and come below."

With an anxious glance at the oncoming vessel, Captain Hartley turned smartly to the ladder and descended, closely followed by his son. In the cabin abaft the mess-room the captain opened his locker and searched out a roll of papers.

"Colin," began he, coming briskly to the bench, "I am minded to put some great trust in you, for though but sixteen you are of man's strength, and should be fit to carry through a man's enterprise. I told you we had come to Palm Island for treasure. That is true; but we have also come here to recover a ring."

"A ring!" echoed the other.

"Ay, an' a queen's ring at that. Now, listen. Three years since, when Sir Francis Drake put out with his twenty-five ships against the Spanish Indies, he had an audience with Queen Bess. In token of her good will she gave him a black pearl ring, inscribed with an 'E,' bidding him wear it always—'And,' quoth she, 'if you lose this ring you may chance also to forfeit my abiding friendship.' Is that much clear, lad?"

"Ay, sir," answered Colin.

"Then mark you what fell out. Early in the voyage our bluff Sir Francis seized a carrack bearing a small coffer packed to brim with current moneys. Now, he was minded to leave this hidden somewhere, that he might put back for it later, so it was rowed off to this

same Palm Tree Island towards which we are now hastening, and there buried. Also—being a plain sailor, with little stomach for vain ornament—our good admiral pulls off the Queen's ring, stuffs it in a handy purse, and buries it with the chest!"

"So!" cried young Colin, his interest stirred. "'Twas surely a rash deed, when the gift was from Bess of England!"

"True, boy—and, look you, what comes of it. Our gallant Drake meets sickness, and falls in with some two hundred Virginian colonists. He cannot turn in to Palm Tree Island, as he had planned; he must needs return to England without that chest of spoil—and without the Queen's ring!"

"And was its absence noticed?"

"Ay, indeed. When Drake came to Court he was taxed with not wearing the royal token; whereupon he happily replied that it should adorn his finger when next he paid his duties. But that coffer—ay, and the ring, too—seemed little worthy of a special fetching; and so time slipped by till last year, when Sir Francis hailed back from Cadiz. Her Majesty, instead of receiving the stout old rover with full acclaim, contrived to have him alone, and demanded why he still made clear his scorn for her by scorning her royal present!"

Colin laughed aloud.

"Well, lad, you may laugh safely here," was his father's rueful rejoinder, "for a woman's whims are strange enough, whether she be queen or commoner. But Sir Francis, being taxed with losing the token, swore no, it was not so; not adding that he had consigned it to a desert isle!"

"Now, excellent!" chuckled Colin. "'Tis a tale that fits him well!"

"Well, I need not go over all the rest: save that Sir John Hawkins, coming to hear the truth of the matter, moved that my sloop should be sent to fetch this ring and chest of coin, which Sir Francis did so cheerfully abandon."

"And now?"

"Well, now I am vexed in my mind; for there is the danger of this approaching Spaniard seeking to engage us. But, see, I will commit this map of the island to your keeping; it was drawn out by Drake himself, and shows patly where the stuff is hidden. You shall therefore be dropped in a boat with Storm and another, having tools for digging, and you shall make all haste to unearth the spoil."

"Good! And what of the *Swallow*?"

"She shall keep on her flight, and, as I hope, outpace the Spaniard, who will not know of her halt at the island. If we can but shake the Dons off we will be speedy to return and pick you up. By this, we safeguard the papers and also save time—which is most needful to my plans. Now, is that all clear?"

"Ay, sir!" was the prompt rejoinder; "and I am well prepared for the venture."

CHAPTER II

ON PALM TREE ISLAND

"HOORAY, sir—we'm forcing a passage now! Yet, mercy on me, such toil is mortal warming!"

Abel Storm, with heaving chest, paused in a grove of great tree-fern, leaving his broad blade swinging in the weave of herbage, while he mopped and mopped his brow. Then both he and John Norman—the second sailor to land with Colin—fell doggedly to the task again.

Very soon a fair stream of moonlight came down to them 'twixt the thinning boughs above, and in a few short minutes they were in a shadeless clearing. At their feet a round pool of water, reflecting the moon-rays, gleamed up like a silver disc.

"How kind a sight!" exclaimed John Norman, and, dropping full length, he dipped his mouth to take a deep, sweet draught.

The others copied his example, and there followed then a keen survey of the surrounding belt of poon trees. The hunt was brief, for Abel Storm, without aid of any light save that from the sky, came readily upon a tarred wedge of timber.

"Good luck!" cried Colin. "Here is our spit of wood, just as the chart makes plain. Now, lads, at it with a will."

Once the overgrown tendrils were cleared the digging went apace, and soon the shovel blunted on a hard surface. This, presently, was cleared to view, but an effort to root up the coffer resulted only in a bursting of its lid.

"Ah, easy now!" said Colin. "Why, is the cover torn off?"

"Ay, young master—broke from her hinges," grunted Storm. "Marry, but here's a right precious sight for an eye that aches!"

The old salt had the lid drawn up, and a tarnished heap of gold money shone dully to the stars. A dot of scarlet in the midst turned out to be a small silk purse, and it was this which Colin at once plucked up and handled eagerly.

"I feel it!" cried he. "Our quest ends well."

Whereupon he freed the clasps of the purse, and drew forth a heavy keeper ring, inset with a coal-black pearl which showed the initial "E."

"The Queen's ring!" he whispered. "Now, be quick to——"

"*Ssh!*" Old Abel dropped such a warning grip on Colin's arm that the silken purse slipped to the ground. Before the young fellow could stoop to recover it there was a hum of voices in his ears, and a close swishing of leaves. Next minute into the open before the well, there appeared the well-knit figures of six or seven soldiery.

"The Dons!" breathed Norman, and that was all; for the three English, surprised beyond measure, had naught to choose but crouch and be silent.

That these men were indeed Spaniards could not be doubted for a moment, for their fine hose, their hidalgo-beards, and their boastful trappings proclaimed them. Each carried with him a couple of barricos, which well explained his presence at the well.

The new comers were much spent for breath, and, after filling their barricos with water, they squatted about, lit up cigarros, and fell to a murmur of earnest talk. Colin—who knew the language well—was greatly aroused by what was said, and he presently clasped at the shoulder of Abel Storm.

"They will see us if they turn this way," he muttered, "and that must of no account happen. Back—work further back!"

The move was begun; but Norman, who had been holding fast to the shattered coffer-lid, let it slide to its pit with a thud. The noise was quite small, but it served to bring a couple of the Spaniards to their feet. Then sounded a quick note of astonishment.

"Away!" urged Colin. "They have seen us!"

There had arisen a great shout in the glade now. Both Norman and Abel Storm took shots, or so it sounded; but Colin did not linger, for he hoped that the treasure—still half concealed—might best be saved by drawing off the foe.

Somehow he stumbled on the passage they had cut, and, holding to it, he broke down the slope amid a press of vegetation which beat him as he passed. Not till he had burst through the fringe of palms to the sea beach did he realise the folly of his mad tactics. For up the shore from a waiting pinnace there came running some ten or eleven Spaniards. He could not possibly avoid them; he was plumply into their clutches.

"Storm! Norman!" pealed he; then

Tearing his right arm free, Colin launched a powerful blow at the Spaniard who mocked him.

whipped out his only weapon, a light Spanish rapier.

On the instant blades flashed all about him; but hardly had his steel rasped theirs before he was encircled, and his elbows clipped from behind. He wriggled nimbly, and a very finely garbed superior, in half-armour and a hat of gold lace, laughed in quiet mockery at the entertaining sight. Whereupon Colin, tearing his right arm free, launched a very firm English fist at the teeth of this elegant Castilian.

The blow was a stinging one, for Colin, during his rash charge downhill, had slipped the royal ring on his own third finger for safety, and it was the solid ridge of this which cut hard at the Spaniard's chin.

With a note of wrath, the outraged noble pounced on the English youth's clenched hand. It was a tussle now for the ring itself, so that Colin strove with everything at stake. Two stout hits he got in on chest and neck; but after that the swung butt of a calivar came stunningly to his forehead. The stars above swam, and he collapsed limply in their arms.

When Colin's senses drifted back he became aware of salt water being dashed in his face. He was stretched near the purling surf, being propped on Abel Storm's knee. John Norman, close by, was shaking his fist at two craft being rowed round the coral breakwater to the princely vessel which floated perhaps a cable's length beyond.

Colin, labouring up, fumbled at his right hand.

"The ring!" cried he. "The Queen's ring! 'Tis gone; they've stolen it!"

"Ay, an' they've seized on our boat, too!" roared Abel Storm, after which he went off in a frenzy, calling himself by outrageous names—for he had gone astray in the thickets, and had scrambled to the beach only just in time to see the enemy put off.

"'Tis the *Santa Bona!*" John Norman was saying. "Of that I am full certain, for we had a crack at her in Cadiz port but twelve months back. And that fine dandy-tom is none other than her captain, Don Pedro de Galcon."

"I care little who he is," deplored Colin, bracing up; "but that he thieved what we mostly sailed for is the worst of disasters. My father must needs go home and report a failure now—and all through my sorry bungling. Yet he will have more than that to tell of, for did you not note what those Dons were saying by the well?"

"Nay, sir; I've but scant knowledge of their high-flown tongue. What said they?"

"Why, that the great Armada has actually sailed, and is now on its way to England! These of the *Santa Bona*—if that be her title—are chartered to join it forthwith."

This was news indeed, and both the others were roused to lively excitement. Two hours later the *Swallow* was back to pick them up—the *Santa Bona*, by then, being completely lost to sight.

And so it happened that the tail of the squall which drove the Spaniards' fleet into the Bay of Biscay served well to blow the *Swallow*, under all canvas, into Plymouth Harbour. News that Lord Howard, Drake, and other captains were at bowls on the Hoe brought Colin's father there hot-foot. In the midst of many greetings he broke the momentous news.

"The Armada is upon us!" cried he. "It approaches the Channel now; we had a sight of it but yesterday—coming on in a wide crescent of far more than a hundred sail!"

There was much starting at this, much looking out to sea, and a great chorus of exclaim; but as for Drake, he was quite unruffled, and he said, in the soberest of tones:—

"You tell us not of your voyage, good Hartley. How fared your mission to the Isle of Palms?"

"Sir," replied the captain, "we have fetched off the coffer of coin; but it grieves me to say that the ring is lost. It happened that——"

"Nay, nay!" interposed Lord Howard, whose anxiety was patent; "we will not dawdle with such a matter now, for the hour is fraught with the gravest peril. We must to sea at once! Admiral Drake, I look for your shrewd counsel——"

"Ay, my lord, an' you shall have it gladly—when the rubber is done." The old sea-dog laughed deep in his throat as he made to balance a bowl. "There is plenty of time to win this game," added he, "and to thrash the Spaniards, too!"

CHAPTER III

HOW COLIN FOUGHT TO WIN

"THEY run—they run! Here, Colin, my lad, slip you for'ard and have the bow-gun slewed to cripple her sails. We must hold her now, lad—we must rake her to a standstill!"

The wide waters were a babel of sound; a tumultuous arena made wild by a clamour

of ordnance, by the ceaseless notes of battling hundreds, and by the heaving reflection of scurried lights.

The great Armada was all but fought to its finish; and never, surely, in the whole tale of the years to come, would England rise to deeds of hardier courage than had been done this week by the sons of her tiny fleet against the ponderous castles of Spain.

Some days had passed since the *Defiance* had delivered her first shot, and to-night the English knew well that the foe was beaten and scattered beyond all rallying.

Captain Hartley and his little *Swallow* had been in every brisk action throughout the battle; worrying the proud host from dawn to sundown; the sloop, so easily handled, having come through all with scarce a scratch.

Colin, running to the bows with his father's order, jostled there upon Abel Storm—though that fine old Bidefordian, naked to the waist and covered with sweat and grime, was hardly to be recognised. Storm lifted his voice at once.

"Have you yet took the shape of her, sir?" bellowed he, above the rattle of musketry. "'Tis the *Santa Bona* with whom we'm now dealing—'tis she an' no other!"

"The *Santa Bona!*" echoed Colin, remembering that such was the name given to the ship which had come to Palm Tree Island. "Are you sure?"

"Ay, I have seen her title writ up. But, look, she moves apace. Shall——"

"Her mizzen top-masts!" shouted back Colin. "They are crowding sail. Put your shots there——"

He got no further, for the small ball from a Spanish *patararo*, lower aimed than most, tore the *Swallow's* bowsprit full away, leaving them both in a trail of swinging stays.

But Abel Storm, nimble to extricate himself, shouted orders to his gunners, while Colin rushed back along the thronged deck to his father's side. It was just as he got there that a babel of joy went up from forty English throats, for a broadside from the *Swallow* had taken the enemy's maintop exactly plumb, and had sent a whole tower of canvas by the board and across her waist.

This, added to the smoke and the din of conflict, wrought endless confusion on the Spaniard's deck, and the flights of arrows which her bowmen had kept pouring upon the sloop were brought suddenly to a stop.

"Now then, lads—all together!" roared Captain Hartley, seizing the opportunity. "Stand by to board!"

Whereupon the sloop's crew, still cheering for the success of their broadside, cheered yet the louder, and rushed to starboard. The *Swallow* by this, moving fast alongside the bedraggled giantess, collided shudderingly at first, grazed in then, and remained locked to the other by aid of her shrouds and channels.

Instantly the English tars were leaping for what grips they could find, making much use of the galleon's wreck of ropes, and finding apt foothold in the gun-ports of her three tier of ordnance.

Thus they came tumbling over the wall-like bulwarks, and so to the middle deck. The Spanish bowmen, unready and bewildered, fled pell-mell without ado; but there was a rain of lead from the upbuilt after-castle, where a party of arquebusiers were set with their clumsy weapons on crutches.

"At them—rout them out!" shouted Captain Hartley; yet ere this sortie could be made there was a rush from the main hatchway, and a further commandant of soldiers—most of them pikemen—hemmed the boarders about, and so put an end to the arquebusade from the stern.

For a full minute now the English "bull-dogs" were tried hard, but their dashing tactics—as was the case in all these assaults—brought them out of the press actually without loss of a man, while the foe were driven some to the scuppers and some to the gaping poop windows, where they dived through like so many bolting rabbits.

Colin Hartley, with just half a dozen sailors at his back, plunged aft to make this rout complete, and he was in time to collide with an exquisite foeman who, shouting boldly for a rally, came hasting through the posted casements.

Though clad in mail and topped with a silver morian, Colin recognised him at once, for it was the very grandee who had felt his fist on Palm Tree Island.

"Don Pedro de Galcon!" cried Colin, stirred by this meeting to hotter excitement. "Now, 'tis fine to have a sight of you again!" And thereupon he smote down with all the might he could put to his arm.

Back fell the noble Spaniard, fencing readily, yet seeking more play for his arm than ever he was allowed to get. Colin's weapon now was something better than a light rapier; and, his spirit wakened to the bout, he fought with all that aggressive skill which his elders delighted to applaud.

Again and again Don Pedro feinted for an

opening, but the other was too quick and too wary; and at length, when a thrust of the Spaniard's sped badly astray, Colin put the power of his sinews into a stroke that glanced from the shining headpiece to meet a shoulder with such impact that the mail upon it crackled and rent.

Don Pedro went down with a groan, sprawling to the deck; and, while his sword-arm crooked as to avoid more blows, the young conqueror saw a glint of gold from his exposed third finger.

Colin, with a shout of triumph, caught at that finger and whipped the circlet off. As he did so, there was a renewal of cheering from the forward hatchways; for the remnant of pikemen, discarding their weapons, had been driven thither, and the *Santa Bona* was a prize to Captain Hartley.

"Still sound, lad?" panted the latter, as Colin came hastening to join him. "Eh—what is that you show me?"

"The Queen's ring!" sang out Colin, waving his find aloft. "By a happy chance our victory gives it back!"

"Bravo, boy! Why, 'tis as good an ending to the fight as one could ask for."

"Ay, an' I wish we might fall in soon with Admiral Drake, that he may come to hear of our fortune."

"Then your wish stands well to be granted; for, see, there is the admiral's pinnace now bearing up, an' I'll wager that's he in the stern."

Having paused in his chase to come aboard, Sir Francis offered instructions as to steering the *Santa Bona* back to Plymouth. From Colin he received the Queen's ring with delight, shaking that hero very heartily by the hand.

"'Tis most opportune," averred he, eyeing the gold keeper with a sly wag of the head. "I could scarce have met Her Gracious Majesty again without confessing to the loss. But this ring, as 'twere, gives me fair passport to Court; and I am picturing our Sovereign's joy when she hears how Spain's proud tyranny has been shamed outright to the world."

PROFESSIONAL CAUTION

The Winter Bather: "Cuck-cuck-coming in this morning, Cu-Cu-Cuthbert?"
Cuthbert (a medical student): "Don't know yet. I'll wait and see how your 'reaction' works out, old chap."

FLAMEHAIR THE SKALD

A Story of the Days when the Norsemen ruled the Seas.

By H. BEDFORD JONES. ◇ Illustrated by T. Heath Robinson.

ALFGAR, called Flamehair from his golden locks, is a young Saxon captured from England by a marauding band of Vikings, who themselves are subsequently beaten at sea by Harald Hardrede, of Norway, whose service Alfgar enters. He proves his worth by a remarkable feat of oar-walking, and also wins the favour of the Norsemen by his skill as a skald, or singer, but incurs the jealousy of one named Svein Arnison.

He learns that Harald, exiled from his own land, of which he is the rightful sovereign, has now decided to return to Norway to regain his throne, travelling first to Kiev, the southern capital of Russia, whose king, Jarisleif, is Harald's firm friend.

The Norse ship, the *Crossbeak*, reaches the shores of the Black Sea, and the party lands. During a hunting expedition in the forest, Alfgar is attacked by Svein, and becomes separated from his companions. Before he can rejoin them he is captured by Tartars, in whose hands he finds another of Harald's men, an English Dane named Hrolf Dagson.

After a few days of captivity the two escape and set out in the direction of Kiev, where they hope to meet Harald. They encounter a pilgrim monk calling himself Basil of the Errand, who tells them that a man and a maid passed him not long before. From his description they know the two to be Svein and Hrolf's own daughter Sigfrid, whom Svein has long wished to wed.

In a Tartar village they learn that Svein has joined a rival tribe whose headquarters are at a Gothic castle forty miles off. Their informants agree to join Alfgar and Hrolf in an expedition against this tribe.

CHAPTER XII

THE CASTLE OF THE GOTHS

THE next day Alfgar, who had tacitly assumed command of the expedition, Hrolf being too moody and distraught to manage the details, inspected the men of the village who were to accompany him. These consisted of a score of men, half the fighting force of the place. The others remained behind in case the village required defence.

Small as the number was, however, the Saxon was amazed at their skill with weapons. He himself was accounted of good worth with the bow, but these Tartars were far beyond him. Their flint-tipped spears—for with them iron was very valuable—surprised him by their weight and accuracy, and taken all in all he came to the conclusion that with enough of such warriors they might well succeed.

With heavy weapons Alfgar was far superior to any with whom he tried his skill. With sword or axe and shield none of the Tartars could stand against him, and after a few fencing bouts with the chiefs the latter came to hold him in high respect.

This served him in good stead when the men from other places began to come in that evening. By threes and fours they arrived, establishing separate camps, and Alfgar was up until nearly midnight. Then the German slave informed him that all the levies were in, the whole number being two short of fifty. All heard the tale of Alfgar's prowess, and they treated him with the greatest of deference. Hrolf spent the greater part of the day by himself, sharpening his weapons and polishing his byrnie and shield, and Alfgar did not disturb him.

At dawn they started through the forest on their march, all being mounted on the wiry little horses. The Saxon slave was taken along to act as interpreter, for Alfgar had no other means of conveying his orders to the Tartar chiefs. As to their plans he was in some doubt.

"What is our best course?" he asked Hrolf, as they rode along. "It seems that we can reach this castle by evening, if we push on fast. Had we best make an assault on the place or take it by craft?"

"By craft," replied Hrolf, eager and active now that the strain of waiting was over. "Svein will never dream of danger, and if we can surprise his stronghold before he knows we

are near, it will go hard if we fail to overcome him."

So Alfgar communicated the plan to the chiefs, who at once pushed on at a faster pace. He tried in vain to get from them some idea of the general form of the castle, but they could not tell him more than it was a great stone building. So he and Hrolf decided that they could only wait for darkness and then act as circumstances might direct.

Some of the men brought in a deer and they made a brief midday meal, pushing on again at once. They were now getting into the hills, leaving the lower ground behind, and after an hour came upon a faint but well-defined trail. This the Tartars examined carefully, and assured Alfgar that they were now only a few miles from the castle. The pace had been a severe one all day and to Alfgar it seemed cruel to press the horses as they did; but the little beasts responded nobly, and shortly after sunset the party halted. After a short consultation the German turned to the two leaders.

"The castle is only half a mile distant," he announced, "and they wish to know what to do next."

"Let all the men remain here," said Alfgar promptly. "Do you and the chiefs advance on foot with us."

The Tartars at once set about making small fires of very dry wood, which would send up little smoke, and Alfgar, Hrolf, the slave, and three of the chiefs set out on foot, following the track. This led them between two hills, through a narrow valley, and here the Tartars motioned to be cautious. They turned an abrupt angle of a cliff, and a little cry of astonishment escaped Hrolf as the castle appeared above them.

This, a relic of the days when these lands formed a flourishing part of the great Empire, had been placed with no small military skill on a jutting-out crag of the hill. The position was a strong one, for on only one side could the place be attacked. The castle itself seemed to be in fair condition, and a number of figures on the walls showed that it was well guarded.

"It is a strong place, eh, Hrolf?"

"Like enough," nodded the other carelessly, "but I have been at the taking of stronger. These Greek castles have no inner keep, such as the Franks build, and once the walls are scaled it is all over. It is my rede that we wait until midnight or after, prepare torches and ropes, and send up a few men to silence the guards the first thing. If we can remain unseen until our men are over the walls the thing is easy."

"There must be a goodly force of men in there," remarked Alfgar, slowly.

"What of it?" responded, Hrolf sharply. "With a dozen men I could take the whole castle, were we to surprise it. How are they to know our number, Flamehair? Come, let us back to camp, for we have much to do."

As they walked back to the camp Alfgar explained his plan to the chiefs. Upon arriving, these at once set the men to work making inflammable torches and flares which might be ready for instant use. Ropes were also made ready and men chosen for their lightness of foot and activity to scale the walls first and silence the guards. The chiefs, who had at first been downcast at sight of the castle, so impregnable it seemed in spite of its ruined condition, were now full of confidence in the young leader.

As they waited for the dead of night, the men talking in low tones, Hrolf beckoned Alfgar out of hearing of the German, whose name was Morcar.

"Lad," he said earnestly, "didst note the bird that flew before us on the way back?"

"No," returned Alfgar, wondering. "What bird?"

"The raven," said Hrolf, impatiently. "The raven of Odin! It was a message to me, Flamehair, a message from the gods."

The Saxon stared at him, wondering if his brain were touched by his great sorrow. But Hrolf was in deadly earnest.

"It is said that Odin so warns those of my house," he continued, "before they are to be gathered to Valhalla. Lad, should I fall to-night you will care for Sigrid, and take her safely to Harald?"

"Nonsense," laughed Alfgar, although a little uneasily, for he had heard many tales of Odin's ravens. "We are Christian men, Hrolf, and take no thought for such things! Besides, this forest is full of birds of all kinds!"

"Nay, this was a warning," persisted the Viking. "It is in my mind that I strike my last blow to-night, Flamehair. Peace, lad! Let me speak out my thought. If the sign be a true one, lad, and if the maid is recovered, then ask these Tartars for an escort to pass you from tribe to tribe and strike for Russland. It is a desperate chance, but it is your only one."

"Come, come," urged Alfgar, who was in truth dismayed at Hrolf's words. "Pull yourself together, man! You will soon forget such thoughts when we are over the walls and the sword dance is forward. Besides, if our allies see you thus downcast they will speedily lose heart."

"Trust me for that, Flamehair," returned the Viking, grimly. "If Odin calls me this night, as I think he will, I will fear only for Sigrid. You are freed of your oath, lad, until Harald has his throne, and it may well be that I shall meet Svein this night and be his bane. But if aught has happened to Sigrid, and the man escapes me, then follow him to the very bounds of Niflheim itself!"

Alfgar shivered slightly as he gazed into the sombre intent eyes of the Viking.

"I will do all that may be done in the matter,"

he said, quietly. "Yet if Sigrid be saved, and you fall, Hrolf, my first duty is to take her out of this land. Now I see the chiefs are coming towards us; most like it is time to be stirring, so forget your gloomy thoughts, Hrolf, and to the work in hand!"

Their fingers gripped silently across the fire, and the next moment the group of chiefs approached and spoke to Morcar. He turned to Alfgar with a question, and the latter nodded as he rose.

"All ready. Let those who are to scale the walls set out first. We will give them a slight start and be ready in case they fail."

As this was translated, a dozen men, bearing light ropes and daggers, dashed off. The others assembled more slowly, and the two Northmen joined the chiefs at their head. All save the leaders had torches ready to light from covered brands.

As they moved away from the tiny fires, Alfgar distinctly saw a dark shadow flap from a tree and cross their path. He glanced at Hrolf, and the Viking only gave a grim laugh and strode onward. But at Alfgar's heart it seemed as if an icy hand had clutched, for the shadow was a huge raven.

When they gained the mouth of the defile they did not pause, but continued their way silently until they stood in the very shadow of the castle walls. These loomed black and gloomy in the starlight above them, and only with an angry effort did Alfgar dispel the hopelessness that seized upon him. From all around rose the night noises of the forest, yet so still was the night that Alfgar heard from far down in the valleys the angry grunts of some old boar crashing through the thickets towards his bed. Then Morcar gripped his arm suddenly, and soft but clear from the mass of the walls above came the weird call of an owlet. So natural was it that from the forest answered two others, and the Saxon was taken by surprise when the chiefs moved forward.

Then they were standing against the walls themselves,

Seizing the rope that dangled down the castle wall, Alfgar pulled himself silently and swiftly up.

and a whisper rose as the men searched for the dangling ropes. A chief beside Alfgar located the first of these, and pressed it into the Saxon's hands. Alfgar was not eager for the honour of going up first, but did not hesitate. Slinging his shield over his shoulder he went up the rope silently and adroitly hand over hand until he got a grip with his feet. It seemed that he would never reach the top, until a hand grasped his shoulder and pulled him up.

He was on the top of the wall, two Tartars beside him. At his feet lay a quiet form, and with a little shudder Alfgar saw that the arms were flung out to either side. He had small time to think of this, however, for Hrolf was close beside him on the rope, and others were already swarming up the walls.

Below them were lights, from a long low building that stood inside the square of masonry. The sound of loud voices reached them, and Alfgar followed one of the guides to the stairs that led down into the courtyard. A moment later the Tartars were crowding behind him, and he advanced to the long building, which was of wood.

Reaching the doorway, he saw inside a wild crowd of men drinking and feasting. Most of them were sprawled out asleep, but at the farther end sat a few whose talk rose high, and among them was Svein the Norseman. Instantly Alfgar turned and passed the word, and a flame of light seemed to fill the courtyard as the torches were kindled.

Something twanged beside Alfgar's ear, he saw a man behind Svein clutch at his throat and stagger down, then the quiet night leaped into madness. Roaring his war-cry Hrolf rushed into the hall sword in hand. The sleeping men were up instantly, Svein caught up a huge axe and sprang forward, and behind Alfgar shrilled up the Tartar yell and the keen twang of bowstrings.

Surprised as they were, the band of Svein had little chance. Half of them were cut down before they found their weapons, but the rest gathered about their leader at the far end of the hall and defended themselves desperately. Alfgar, pressing forward with the rest, saw Hrolf crash forward into the midst of them, his sword flaming red in the torchlight, and at the same instant he saw Svein disappear.

Instantly his thoughts flew to Sigrid. Crafty as Svein was he would hardly have such a stronghold without secret ways of escape, and Alfgar darted forward in desperation. Two of the raiders leaped at him, but Alfgar felled one with his shield and sent the other staggering back with a thrust in the shoulder, and before him were the hangings behind which he had seen Svein slip. Tearing them aside, he saw a narrow passage before him and darted down this at full speed.

He was barely in time. The passage opened on a small room, in which Alfgar could dimly see two struggling figures. With a shout he sprang at them. There was a deep curse in Svein's voice, and Alfgar's blade shattered on the huge axe of the Viking, meeting it full in its descent. His hand was numbed by the shock, but he flung himself at the other's throat, hoping to keep him until the men could come up. But the effort was vain. Just as the light of a torch flickered through the room from the passageway behind, Alfgar heard a cry from Sigrid, and went staggering back beneath a sword-like thrust of the great axe. Before he could recover, the figure of Svein had vanished.

"Is it you, Alfgar?" cried Sigrid, as the men behind burst into the room. The Saxon turned and caught the hand she had extended to him. "Were you wounded?" she inquired breathlessly, startled wonder in her eyes still.

"Nay, maiden," smiled Alfgar, although he knew he would bear the mark of that thrust for many a day. "Quick, are you unharmed? We must catch him ere he escapes."

"I am safe, quite safe," and suddenly the girl broke down and sank sobbing on the couch beside her. Alfgar turned to the Tartars and pointed out the window whence Svein had escaped. They were after him in an instant, and he looked about for Hrolf, fearing yet to leave Sigrid alone.

But Hrolf was not there. From the great hall beyond came the sound of fierce yells and the ring of steel, and with a sudden fear Alfgar ran through the passage. Reaching the hall, he was just in time to see Hrolf cut down a gigantic opponent with one sweep of his sword, and at the same moment an arrow, shot at close range, tore through the byrnie of the Viking.

With a cry of grief Alfgar caught his friend as he fell. Paying no heed to the fighting men around him, he pillowed Hrolf's head on his knee. The Dane was quite conscious, and caught his hand.

"Sigrid?" he murmured feebly.

"Safe," cried Alfgar, tears on his cheeks. "Can you stand? She is here, close by!"

At the words, Hrolf pulled himself up determinedly, passed his arm about Alfgar's neck, and staggered beside him through the passage. "I was right, lad," he whispered faintly. "It was the raven of Odin!"

"Sigrid!" called Alfgar. "Here is your father! Stay, he is sore hurt," he added as the form of the girl came towards them in the darkness. With a cry of bitterness and sorrow Sigrid flung her arms about her father, and the Viking pulled himself away from Alfgar.

"Safe, girl, safe!" he cried exultantly. "Odin calls me, Sigrid! Hail, Valkyrie, hail! Ah—my Sigrid!"

As Hrolf sank to the floor, Alfgar paused. For in that moment it seemed to the boy, aghast, that there was a sound of wings in the air, that

an answering cry met and mingled with that of the Viking, and that steel clashed on steel! He tried to move, but could not; and an instant later, when a number of Tartars burst into the room with torches, he saw only the still form of Hrolf on the floor, with that of Sigrid over him. The Valkyries had indeed called their hero.

CHAPTER XIII

ACROSS THE STEPPES

THE first thing Alfgar was conscious of was that he was in dense blackness. He tried to move, but could not, and found that he was swathed in bandages. Slight as his movement was, it sent a pain through him, and he remembered that thrust of the axe given him by Svein. He tried to call out, and at the sound a rude hanging before him parted and he saw a dark form betwixt him and the firelight outside.

"Where am I?" he murmured. "Who comes? Is it——"

"Hush!" came the voice of Sigrid, as the dark figure dropped to his side. "You must not talk Saxon. We are in the Tartar camp and have been here two days."

"Was I hurt badly?" Alfgar paid no attention to the injunction as to silence.

"You were badly bruised, Flamehair. But the hurt is not serious, and rest—oh! What are you doing?"

Alfgar kindly but firmly removed the hand she had placed on his shoulder, and struggled up to a sitting position, smiling. Despite the pain, he resolved to put his Viking training into practice, and even rose to his feet.

"There, there, Sigrid," he laughed, although faintly. "It ill becomes a man to lie abed when he is but bruised. Stay, I will sit down, if you will have it so. Now tell me all the story, maiden."

"Well," began Sigrid, quietly, seeing that she could not restrain Alfgar, "it started in that Greek seaport where Harald landed for water and more plunder. We women were all left in the ship, while the Vikings went ashore. On the next evening Svein Arnison rowed out in a small boat, with the news that Harald was sore hurt and had sent for me, having word of you and father."

Sigrid's voice trembled, but after a slight hesitation she conquered her grief and went on calmly.

"I thought nothing wrong, of course, and went into the boat with him. But, instead of rowing towards the torches on the wharf, he went to one side, saying that Harald lay in a house near the walls. When we landed he bade me go ashore first, and as I did so he flung a cloak over my head and tied it firmly around me."

A cry of anger and indignation broke from Alfgar at this, but the girl paid no heed.

"He put me over some skins on the back of a horse and mounted one himself. We rode most of the night, then he made me promise not to try to escape if he freed me. This I promised, for I knew not where I was. I fell asleep as soon as he untied me, for we were both very weary. In the morning we went on, and that day the horses nearly gave out. But, just as mine was stumbling, we met an old man who——"

"I know!" interrupted Alfgar quickly. "We met him, and it was he who put us on your trail! He was a Greek monk."

So then he told her the strange story of Basil of the Errand, at which Sigrid was much amazed, for she had heard often of the great Olaf Trygg-vison and his supposed death at Svold.

"Yes," she nodded, as Alfgar finished, "I was more angry than ever at Svein's treatment of him, but I could do nothing. We went on at top speed after that, and, indeed, Svein treated me courteously enough in all things. The second day after, we came upon some Tartars. Svein spoke to them in their tongue and seemed to find one among them who knew him. They brought us to the castle, and Svein was at once taken as chief.

"He told me that we would be married in Christian fashion, and my words did not shake him in the least, for the next day he sent the Tartar away, as he said, for a priest from one of the settlements. Then you came, and—and father——"

Here Sigrid broke down and began to sob softly. Alfgar, feeling a sudden great pity for the fatherless girl, put out his hand and stroked her hair softly, soothing her. After a little space her sobs lessened and he told her of Hrolf's bidding.

"So fear not, Sigrid," he concluded gently, "I shall bear out his bidding in all things, and together we will make our way through this barbarous country to Russia. After all, it should not be so hard. It is in my mind that these Tartars will give us an escort willingly. Tell me, is your father——"

"Yes," replied Sigrid, as he paused. "He was laid to rest yesterday. I—I put a little cross over his grave."

Alfgar said nothing to her about his strange conversation with Hrolf, but his mind flew to that last scene in the old castle.

"Tell me, Sigrid," he asked quickly, to change the subject, "did you hear a sound like the rush of wings and hoofs clicking in the air, and the clash of arms just afterwards? It seemed to me that the Valkyries came, in very sooth!"

"Nay," she answered, wonderingly, "I heard nothing."

"Well, perchance it was but fancy," returned Alfgar. "Now, Sigrid, are you all ready to start to-morrow?"

"To-morrow?" she echoed blankly. "Why,

how is that possible? You will not be able to move for——"

"Nonsense!" smiled Alfgar, getting to his feet and throwing aside the skin that hung across the door of the hut. "I am as hungry as a bear, maiden. Fear not, I will be able to ride well enough. Besides, every day counts. If I mistake not, we would have a hard journey if we delayed until the time of snow, and the autumn is well onward."

Half leaning on the arm of Sigrid, Alfgar came to the nearest fire, and a sharp cry went up from the Tartars as they saw Flamehair come quietly up and sit down among them. It was the early part of the evening, and they were eating a kind of stew made from game mixed with roots. Alfgar, together with Sigrid, was given some of this, and he soon felt a great deal stronger. After the first few movements his wounds, to his joy, scarcely bothered him.

A few moments later there came a joyful cry, and Morcar, the German slave, ran up and greeted Alfgar warmly. The honest fellow was so glad to see him that Alfgar was struck with an idea.

"Where is the chief in command?" he asked the German. The latter indicated a Tartar, who grinned amiably at Alfgar, and the Saxon began to put questions to him.

"Can you furnish us with horses and an escort to take us safely through your country?"

The Tartar nodded rapidly, and seizing the hand of Alfgar, pressed it against his forehead. It was evident that he was regarded with the deepest respect and gratitude.

"Can we start to-morrow?"

At this question the Tartar looked blank, and made a long speech. Morcar told the Saxon that it was desired that he should remain with them for a longer time.

"Tell him," said Alfgar, "that I must start to-morrow with this maiden. Tell him also that as recompense for the father of this maid, who lies sleeping yonder in the forest, he shall give me you to take with me."

Morcar stared at Alfgar, then spoke rapidly. Once more the chief nodded, and pressed the Saxon's hand to his forehead in token of obedience, while Morcar, with tears streaming down his cheeks, seized the other hand.

"Do you mean it, lord?" he faltered. "It is no idle jest?"

"It is no jest, Morcar," replied Alfgar, with a smile. "Since the chief has consented, go, get that collar sawn from your neck. You have done me too much service to be aught else than a friend and comrade."

The German kissed Alfgar's hand vehemently, then that of Sigrid.

"Lord," he said after a moment, "you know not how I have prayed for this day; prayed to be free once more ere I died! Ah, to see my own land again, my own forests and rivers, and to hear my own tongue in the mouths of my people! See, lord, I had a wife and little ones, and my old father may still be there waiting for me—ah, just to be free! Lord, my life is yours for the asking, and with joy will I pay the debt I owe you!"

"I want not your life, man," smiled Alfgar, who was deeply touched by the earnestness and gratitude of the Saxon. "Come, get that hateful collar off, and in the morning we will take the first step towards your own land once more. You must make all arrangements for the trip now, and serve as interpreter along the way. Otherwise I fear it would go full hard with us."

The German vanished, and he seemed like a new man. Watching him go away, Alfgar could not help wondering how long men would be made thralls, and if the time would ever come when there would be no more slavery. But that was an impossible dream, and with a faint sigh he turned back to the fire.

His bruises troubled him but little, and he sat for a long time listening to the chiefs and talking with Sigrid. The girl had been greatly saddened by the death of her father, but in her grief there was no trace of weakness, and through the long days thereafter she gave few signs of sorrow, though more than once there were traces of tears on her cheeks in the mornings.

At length Alfgar retired to his hut again, and fell into a sound sleep that lasted until he was roused by Morcar at daybreak. He found his arms neatly arranged, polished anew and free of rust, and in his scabbard hung Hrolf's sword, for Alfgar's had been shattered in the encounter with Svein.

"The maiden ordered it so," explained Morcar, as Alfgar gave an exclamation of surprise at sight of the weapon. "She bade me give the blade to my lord, saying that no other was worthy to wear it." Here the German-Saxon smiled. "My lord will have a surprise when he goes out," he added.

"Very well," laughed Alfgar; "help me on with this byrnie, for I am too stiff to raise my arms. Is the surprise a pleasant one?"

"Perchance," and more than this Morcar would not say. He helped Alfgar into his arms, then took away the shield to hang at the saddle-bow of a horse, and Alfgar left the hut. As he emerged into the grey dawnlight he stopped with a little cry of astonishment. There, standing over a fire, was a Viking, clad in byrnie and helm, quiver slung at side, and spear in hand! But at his exclamation the figure turned, and he looked into the laughing face of Sigrid.

"Hail, Viking! Skoal!" rang out her merry voice. "How like you the new recruit?"

"The byrnie is over long," said Alfgar, advancing, "but in sooth I know not what to say."

"They are my father's arms," replied Sigrid, softly. "It seemed to me, Flamehair, that

there would be little safety for a girl in crossing through these great forests and steppes, so I put up my hair under the helm and slipped the byrnie over my kirtle. It is large, indeed, but what a feeling of security it gives!"

"Aye," smiled Flamehair, quickly, "at a little distance you might easily be taken for a warrior, Sigrid. It is a right good idea, and I should have thought of it. Pull down the helm more in front—there! Now your face is shadowed and you look the part indeed!"

"You had best take this spear," she returned, holding out the weapon. "I will use father's bow, for with that weapon I am at home, and might prove of good use in a pinch. Are you ready for breakfast?"

Alfgar was ravenous again, and after a good breakfast with the chiefs a dozen of the Tartars led up their horses. Morcar, whose collar was now gone, Sigrid, and Alfgar were each given a good steed, and the farewells were then said. As the chiefs had taken great store of booty from the captured castle they were only too glad to give Alfgar all that he wished, but he refused their offers, and, after bidding them God-speed, he climbed stiffly into his saddle, waved his spear, and the little cavalcade moved off through the forest.

At his exclamation of surprise the figure turned, and Alfgar beheld the laughing face of Sigrid.

After a short consultation with Morcar it was decided to head for the northwest in order to avoid the mountains and to cross the great plains or steppes into the land of Jarisleif.

With half a dozen Tartars preceding the group of three, and the rest following, they rode all that day. Once they came to a large village and were met by a hastily summoned crowd of warriors, but the escort proved its value by passing them through safely and obtaining provisions and goat's milk. Once, too, towards evening they met a band of Tartars numbering a score, who stopped them. But, after a few words with the escort, upon a close inspection of Alfgar and Sigrid, the Tartars rode on a short distance and then left them. There was no little amusement as the half-disguise of the girl was noted, but the rough jests seemed kindly enough and the leader of the party exchanged gifts with one of the escort before parting.

That night they camped in the forest. At morning the way was taken up again until they arrived at another village. Here there was a long consultation, and Morcar turned to the Saxon.

"Lord, the men will hand us over to these Tartars, who will then take us forward through their country, for our escort would now return home."

Alfgar signified his assent, and after the midday meal they parted with their first escort and went on with a number of men from the village. The next day they came to sparser forests, and seemed to be on the uplands. As they were jogging along late in the forenoon the Tartars suddenly drew rein and motioned Alfgar to silence. The little horses stood like statues, and Alfgar could hear nothing. Two of the Tartars slipped from their steeds, and went forward on foot.

"They heard something, lord," whispered Morcar. "What it is I know not. Best wait."

After a few moments the two men returned and reported excitedly.

"They say that a score of strange Tartars are encamped ahead, and with them is a prisoner," said the German. "The captive is an old man, who sings aloud in a strange tongue, so they say."

After a hurried conference one of the Tartars beckoned to Alfgar, who jumped down and accompanied him through the trees. After a few hundred yards they came in sight of the encampment, which was nothing more than a halt for rest and eating. But Alfgar gave a start of amazement as the scene flashed before him, for the man sitting bound in the midst of the skin-clad men, who were tearing raw flesh in their savage hunger, was no other than Basil of the Errand!

CHAPTER XIV

AN UNFAITHFUL GUIDE

ALFGAR gripped the arm of the Tartar and drew him back. He said nothing until they reached the party. The escort numbered only a dozen, but Alfgar swiftly made up his mind that if possible the brave old monk should be rescued.

"Give your helm to Morcar," he said to Sigrid. "Morcar, tell the men that we will attack those fellows and rescue the prisoner, who is a friend of mine. Do you wait here in charge of the maid. Take her helm and what arms you will from the Tartars."

When Morcar translated the order the quick satisfaction of the fierce Tartars was evident at once. They loved nothing better than a chance to use their weapons, and Alfgar determined that there must be some old tribal enmity which would account for their delight at attacking the other party. So, leaving Morcar to take care of Sigrid, much against her wishes, he placed himself at the head of the little band and all went forward on foot.

The encamped party suspected no danger, and Alfgar's men took up their positions craftily. When all was ready the leader blew his horn, and with a yell the men sprang out. Leaving the others to fight, Alfgar sprang through the group of startled raiders and swiftly cut the cords that bound old Basil. As he did so he managed to hold off one or two who attacked him, catching their blows on his shield, and cried to Basil to run back to where they had left the horses.

But the great pine-forest held a surprise that was both unexpected and terrible. As Alfgar's men attacked furiously, cutting down a number of the foe before they could snatch up their arms, and just as Basil had reached the trees, a shout arose from an unexpected quarter. Whirling about, Alfgar was dumfounded to see a score of fresh foes taking his men in flank!

The Saxon realised on the instant that there had been two parties of the enemy instead of one. He was already cut off from his men and a dozen foes were rushing at him. A sudden deadly fear darted into his mind as he thought of Sigrid, unprotected save for Morcar. Still he hesitated, inclined to break through to the side of his men, but he saw that this was useless. Half of them were down already.

So, turning, Alfgar gave one shout and sprang at the men behind him. An arrow glanced from his byrnie, but his shield protected his face, and except for his stiffness from the bruises of Svein's axe, Alfgar would have had no fear. The first to meet him went down before the impact, his sword disposed of another, and, warding off a vicious spear-thrust, Alfgar dropped his shield and took to his heels.

Well he knew that his only chance lay in reaching the horses and making off with Sigrid and Morcar. Easily leaving his pursuers behind, Alfgar gave a groan as he reached the path. There before the horses was a little knot of struggling men, while at one side stood Sigrid, an arrow on the string, waiting for a shot.

As Alfgar came up with a shout of rage he saw Morcar holding three Tartars in check while two bodies lay in the path. Wasting no time, the Saxon brought one man down just as another fell beneath Morcar's axe. The third took to his heels and vanished. Morcar was bleeding from a wound, but laughed grimly as a stream of figures poured from the forest behind Alfgar.

"Mount, lord!" he cried.

Casting a glance over his shoulder, Alfgar ran to the horses and helped Sigrid into the saddle of one. When he had gained the back of another, he saw that Morcar still stood in the path, motionless.

"Hasten, Morcar!" he shouted, for the pursuers were only a hundred yards away and arrows were whistling out at them. The German only waved his hand in answer, and struck the horse of Sigrid as it passed him.

"Go, lord!" he panted, lifting his axe. "I have my death-stroke."

"Nonsense," cried Alfgar angrily, holding out his hand. "Here, up behind me, man!"

An arrow splintered on his helm. Morcar only shook his head and pointed to Sigrid.

"Save her, lord! I pay the debt I owe. Farewell!"

And with that he brought down the flat of his axe heavily on Alfgar's steed, which sent the animal into a wild gallop. As the Saxon, exerting every effort to keep on the maddened beast, threw one glance backward, he saw Morcar disperse the other horses and then become the centre of a whirl of steel and flesh as the foemen closed in. A moment later he was among the trees, Sigrid was ahead of him, and

with a little sob Alfgar sent up a quick prayer for the brave Saxon. He made no effort to pull up his horse, but galloped alongside by Sigrid.

The girl's face was white and set, and for a little space Alfgar said nothing, realising that the sacrifice of Morcar had moved her deeply. Indeed, the happenings of the last few days had been as a terrible nightmare to the girl. She had not been unused to scenes of violence, but her own danger and the death of her father seemed so unreal to her that it required something of an effort to face it all without a sign of weakening.

"Morcar was a brave man," said Alfgar quietly, when at length the steeds had been halted for a brief rest. "He has given his life for us, Sigrid, and if I live I swear that some day I will seek out that old father of his and see that he ends his days in peace. Come, we are doubtless being pursued, so we cannot rest very long. Are you unhurt?"

"Yes," nodded Sigrid. "A band of men swept by us at the first yell that went up, and four or five stayed to attack us. Were our escort all cut off?"

"I fear so," replied Alfgar sadly. "The new comers took us in flank, and I had just time to cut my way through to join you. By this time it is all over."

"Were we the only ones to—to escape?" returned Sigrid.

"Unless some of the Tartars slipped off into the woods," answered Alfgar. They started forward at a brisk trot. Suddenly the Saxon pulled up his steed with an exclamation.

"By the rood! I forgot the old man—Basil of the Errand!"

Then he explained to Sigrid how the monk had been freed at the first moment and had vanished in the forest. Sigrid had seen nothing of him, and Alfgar finally reached the conclusion that Basil must have been overtaken by the second party of Tartars in their attack.

They rode steadily forward through a deserted country, holding ever to the northward. Towards sunset they noticed that the trees were growing sparser and more thinly scattered, and at length Alfgar realised that they were almost on the great open plains or steppes of which he had heard so many stories from Harald's men. They had travelled hard and fast, and as Sigrid was weary and he was stiff and sore himself, he determined to camp there.

"We will have to make the best of it," he stated, pointing to a large tree ahead. "That will shelter us, at least. By this time I suppose we have thrown off the pursuit, even if there was any. At any rate we must take the risk and build a fire, for the nights are cold."

"I know not whose horse this was," said Sigrid, as she slipped off, "but the saddle-bags are well supplied. Oh, here is flint and steel, too!"

"Good," smiled Alfgar. "I was wondering how we would manage for a fire. Now for supper. Here is some meat and a few stale grain cakes; but how about water? There seems to be none in sight."

Sigrid searched the saddle-bags she had taken from her steed, and triumphantly produced a bottle of sour Tartar wine and another of goat's milk, with a packet of food. The horses were unsaddled and picketed for the night, and although Alfgar deeply regretted that the beasts had no water, he could do no more. Then a fire was started, and they sat down to their first repast in the wilds.

"Stop!" cried Sigrid suddenly, bending her ear down towards the earth. "Is that not the sound of horses?"

Alfgar followed her example, a quick fear in his heart. Faintly but distinctly he heard the sounds of hoofs, and instantly sprang to his arms, which with Sigrid's had been piled at the foot of the tree. The byrnies and helmets were donned quickly, for Morcar had refused the offer of Sigrid's helm, and with bows ready they slipped behind the tree, ready to jump to their horses if necessary.

"I believe that it is but a single horse," exclaimed Alfgar a moment later. The sound of hoofs was now plain in the darkness, and their anxiety gradually subsided as it became evident that they would have only one horseman to deal with. Closer and closer the hoof-beats thudded, then stopped suddenly. A dim shape became visible at the outer edge of the firelight.

"Who are you?" cried Alfgar, boldly.

"Thanks be to Heaven, I have found you!"

A cry of rejoicing broke from the Saxon as the figure came forward and the light fell on the face of Basil the monk. Dropping their weapons, Alfgar and Sigrid ran forward as he left the saddle and held out a hand to each. Soon they were once more settled by the fire, where Basil attacked the meagre supply of food ravenously.

"I hid in the trees," he explained, when his hunger was somewhat appeased, "until the godless men made an end of fighting and fell to quarrelling over the plunder. Then I made for the horses, took the best I could see, and made haste to follow your tracks. It was not easy, but God led my steed forward until I saw the light of your fire."

"Were all our people killed?" asked Alfgar. "Did you see aught of Morcar, the German? How did you steal a horse so easily? Strange they were not guarded!"

Basil cast a glance at the stout oaken staff which lay at his side. A quizzical look stole into his eyes as he met Alfgar's puzzled expression. "Aye, young Englishman, the steeds were guarded, but I have been a fighting man in my time, and there is yet strength in my arm. As for your men, I could not tell them from the

A cry of rejoicing broke from Alfgar as the horseman came forward and revealed himself as Basil the monk.

rest. The German was lying in the road as I passed, and I halted to bless him ere he died. He was a worthy man."

"But you have not told us how you fell into their hands!" exclaimed Sigrid, deeply interested in the old monk.

"They came upon me in the forest and bound me, that was all," he answered simply. "But I knew there was a Hand stronger than mine which would deliver me, and so indeed it proved."

Alfgar told all that had happened since he and Hrolf had parted with Basil—of the capture of the stronghold, and of Svein's escape and Hrolf's death. Basil listened with close attention at first, but towards the end of the tale he gazed out into the night and seemed wrapped in thought. At the conclusion of the story Sigrid spoke up impulsively.

"You will go on with us now, will you not? Surely you see the impossibility of ever reaching England as you had intended, Basil! Come on with us to Jarisleif, and there you can be sent with a worthy escort to Edward. If Jarisleif will not, then Harald would furnish you with a ship and with men right gladly, for the sake of the memory of King Olaf."

Basil turned his eyes on the earnest face of the girl, and gazed steadily at her while Alfgar seconded her speech with a few words of entreaty. Then he shook his head decidedly.

"Nay, maiden, my errand may not go so far afield. See, I have been long on the way already, and there is yet far to go. What need have I of escort? My Guardian is more than many men and ships, maiden, and I need naught save His hand to guard me. Come with me if you will, and if you will not then go your way and leave me to go mine. I thank you for your good hearts, both of you, but my errand waits and will not be held back."

Sigrid would have pleaded with him, but Alfgar motioned her to silence, well knowing that old Basil would not be argued with.

"As you will, old man," he answered quietly. "Our ways do not lie with yours, yet I am sorry that we must separate in the morning. We would not detain you, and if your mind is made up, so be it. Now, Sigrid, I think we had better rest. There is little use in keeping watch, and we need sleep if we are to travel to-morrow."

Alfgar managed to rig up a rude bed for Sigrid, against her protests, out of his cloak and the saddle-bags. He and Basil flung themselves

down on the other side of the big tree, and the fire was allowed to burn itself out. The young Saxon slept but little that night, for it was bitterly cold. He dared not keep a large fire blazing, however, for fear of attracting enemies.

At dawn they finished the remnants of their food and started out to find water for the horses. After a mile they came across a little stream, and here Basil left them, with his blessing.

"God be with you, friends," he said, as they splashed through the shallow waters and halted on the other bank. "You will bring the maiden through safely, young Englishman, if so be you do not lose faith in His power. Farewell, and God-speed!"

"God-speed," replied Alfgar and Sigrid devoutly, and Basil turned his steed to the west. They stood watching him until the lonely figure was lost in the distance.

"A strange man," remarked Alfgar, softly, as he led the way to the north, where a vast rolling plain stretched before them. "Stay—what is that smoke yonder, amid those trees?"

"A village, possibly," said Sigrid, doubt in her voice. "Shall we go thither, or——"

"We must have food," decided Alfgar. "and it may be that we can find a guide. Let us make the effort."

So turning towards the smoke in the east, they rode slowly along. Half an hour later they were approaching a collection of a dozen huts, from which poured men and women as they came in sight. Alfgar raised his hand, and the weapons were lowered. Reining up, he addressed the Tartars in the Dane tongue. One of the crowd pushed forward and replied in very bad Latin, and Alfgar managed to communicate his wishes.

Food and drink were given them, and after many inquiries they found that Jarisleif's men might be located a few days' journey to the north, although the Dnieper and Russia itself was much farther on. By promise of the golden arm-ring Harald had given Alfgar, the Saxon obtained a guide to lead them aright.

Not wishing to lose any time, they started without delay. The saddle-bags were filled with food, and at length it seemed to the two wanderers that they were on the road to safety. The Tartar who was their guide proved to be a lean, dark-skinned man with crafty eyes, who could say nothing save in his own tongue.

Alfgar and Sigrid pushed their horses fast after him, riding all that day. In the afternoon they sighted the smoke of another village, but did not approach it. Alfgar managed to knock over a small deer with his bow, and that evening they dined sumptuously on the banks of a clear, cold river. There seemed to be no danger, so a big fire was built, and all three lay down beside it, with the rippling of the river below in their ears and the sighing of the wind through the long grass of the steppes lulling them to sleep.

Alfgar wakened uneasily. The sun was high—much too high, he thought. He sat up and looked around. Near the dead ashes of the fire lay the sleeping Sigrid—but where was the guide? Moved by a sudden thought, he sprang up. The horses were gone!

CHAPTER XV

AFOOT

WITH a rapidly sinking heart, Alfgar gazed around. The vast steppe lay stretched out for miles ahead without a break in the tall, waving grass, swept into shimmering lengths by the morning breeze. Behind were scattered trees gradually reaching to the green forest in the farther distance, but it was plain that the Tartar had stolen the horses and slipped away early in the night, for there was no sign of life to be seen. Bitterly reproaching himself for not keeping an eye on the man, whose crafty face he had noted, Alfgar roused Sigrid and told her of the situaton.

"Never mind," she exclaimed, cheerily. "Things are not half so bad as they might be, Flamehair! He has left us our food, at least, and our arms, and we know that the men of Jarisleif cannot be so very far away."

Alfgar smiled wryly at the effort to hearten him.

"You might add that it was lucky he did not put a knife into us as we slept," he made response. "However, my chest is all right now, and in any case I am more used to walking than riding. I fear it will be a hard matter, though, to win our way through this stiff grass on foot. It must be as high as our heads, or higher."

"Then we shall walk in the shade," laughed Sigrid. "Well, we may as well have breakfast here. There is little use in making haste now, I suppose."

"Not a bit," agreed Alfgar. "By yonder river looks a good spot." They made for the place he indicated, and set to work preparing breakfast. Reluctantly Alfgar decided that the byrnie of Sigrid must be left behind, for the weight would be far too much for her to long endure. His own he would wear as long as might be, also Hrolf's sword, which was an unusually fine weapon. Their bows were of little weight and might prove of inestimable value later on. The helmets he also decided to abandon. The sun was not bad at this season, and both he and Sigrid were used to no head-covering. Before many minutes thay had everything ready for a prompt start, with venison steaks broiled over the fire they had kindled, and grain cakes of flour and water. The repast was not exactly epicurean, but neither of the wanderers cared for that. Sea-rovers and their families were used to the coarsest of fare, and Varangar rations had changed Sigrid's tastes but little.

The river below their camp was shallow enough to wade across, after which they set out to the north, Alfgar leading the way. Now came a terrible struggle. The coarse, rough grass of the steppe was higher than their heads, and the Saxon had to force his way through, the saw-like blades cutting into his hands and face and neck. The byrnie protected his body, but his banded leggings were soon reduced to shreds. Indeed, Alfgar would never have thought it possible for mere grass to be so strong and keen. For Sigrid it was not so bad. She followed in the swathe he made and the trampled grass struck her with less force; but when they halted for a breathing space at the end of an hour there was more than one red streak across her face. As for Alfgar, when he turned around Sigrid gave a cry of dismay, for his face was a crisscross of tiny cuts, and his byrnie was spotted and stained with crimson.

"It is nothing," he reassured her with a smile, although the scratches smarted like fire. "We must endure it, Sigrid, for there is no other way. I wish we might strike upon a river, though!"

But river there was none, and never a break occurred in the sea of grass before them. At least, so thought Alfgar as he flung himself down toward midday for a brief rest. Barely had they started on, however, when they found that there was wild life in plenty concealed beneath that waving canopy, as the grass before them parted suddenly and the head of a small deer appeared. Sigrid had been fighting back the grass with her bow strung, and before the startled animal could spring away, the quick-witted girl had sped an arrow and it fell. They refilled their packs with fresh meat, not daring to light a fire here for fear the vast plain would be swept by flames from a chance spark. Fortunately, towards evening they came upon a tiny stream and camped here, weary and spent.

The stream was nothing more than a brook, but it broke the mass of waving grass-blades and wended towards the north-west, so they decided to wade along its bed.

"At least it will save our hands and faces," said Alfgar ruefully, looking at Sigrid's puffed and swollen features and imagining how his own looked. "In good sooth, another day of such struggling and I would be about ready to give up."

"If we only had the horses," sighed Sigrid, bravely, "it would matter little. However, we are making progress, Flamehair, and it cannot last for ever!"

"I wonder how old Basil is making it," said the Saxon, as they splashed along. The water was little more than up to their ankles, and progress was no longer difficult. "I suppose he is far among the mountains by this time."

After an hour or two Alfgar paused. His keen eye had caught a blue spiral of smoke dead ahead. He consulted with Sigrid, and they agreed that it must come from the camp-fire of some party beside the stream. But at the thought of striking away once more into the tall grass both Alfgar and Sigrid decided that anything would be preferable to another such experience, and they concluded to go ahead and take their chance with friend or foe. So with anxious hearts they went forward as quietly as possible, hoping that with luck they might steal past the camp, if such it proved to be, without detection.

Closer and closer they drew to the thin bluish spiral, which was little more than a heat-haze above the steppe. But, as they came nearer, it seemed to Alfgar that, unless the stream curved sharply farther on, the fire was not close to it but a little to the north-west, on the left. This gave them a new hope, for unless the camp was at the stream's edge they would not have to make a detour through that terrible cutting grass.

Anxious as they both were, neither had dared hope for the sight that met their gaze as they rounded a little bend in the stream. Sure enough, the fire was not near the bank, but, as Alfgar judged, some hundred yards to the side. The cause for this became evident at the sight of a dozen of the little Tartar horses grazing at the edge of the stream or standing in it to their fetlocks. All were hobbled or tethered by long ropes, and there were no guards in sight. Instantly Alfgar drew back behind a hummock of grass.

"Do you stay here," he whispered to Sigrid, while I go forward and secure two——"

"Nay," she broke in quickly. "I will go, too. They will not fear two more than one, Flamehair, and it may well be that we shall have to ride in hot haste. But we cannot take the steeds without leaving some recompense behind. Here, I will put this silver armlet on the bank in full sight."

Alfgar nodded. He would have thought little of taking the horses, for he considered that they were in the enemy's country; nevertheless a little flush of shame stole over his cheek and he turned away quickly to hide it. So he led the way forward, stepping as quietly as possible in the water.

The horses paid them little heed, and were evidently too tame to break away. Almost doubting that this good fortune would last, Alfgar very silently loosened the picket-ropes of two, and using a strand of the rope as a bridle led one up the stream, followed by Sigrid with the second. The broad silver armlet lay shining on the bank behind them. A moment later they had mounted, but as the stream still led northward both decided to continue in its bed and so avoid the grass, which was tall enough to give them considerable trouble, even when mounted.

"Sigrid, I will wager that you become a goddess," remarked Alfgar, when the encamp-

ment had been left far behind and they could talk freely.

"How mean you?" asked the girl in surprise.

"Why," chuckled the Saxon, "when the Tartars find that two horses are gone, leaving no tracks, and that a silver armlet is on the bank in their place, they will conclude that some god has visited them! That is," he added, "if they believe in gods, which I doubt."

"Of course they do!" asserted Sigrid, indignantly, but laughing as she spoke. "Even the black-skinned men from Egypt believe in gods, for I have seen them in Tsargrad, praying. Some of them even became Christians."

"I wonder what became of Svein," mused Alfgar, suddenly. "Perchance he is even now somewhere on the steppes. Or he may have fled south towards Greek land once again. I fear that my vow will be long in its fulfilment." Wherewith he told Sigrid of the vow which he had sworn to her father.

"Flamehair," she cried, her eyes flashing, "that were no fitting vow for you to keep! Let be, and forget that you ever——"

They were riding side by side now, and, as Alfgar turned and looked into her eyes, Sigrid sensed something strange in his look, something that made her words die away into nothing, for never before had she seen that Saxon really angry, in cold blood.

"Sigrid," he said, and for all the softness of his voice it reminded her of the tones of Harald Hardrede, "did you ever chance to hear a lay called the wise words of Brynhild? See, this is the second verse of it:—

> My second rede would teach thee
> Trust not the hasty swearer;
> Give thou an oath and keep it,
> But give it slowly ever,
> For he who swears unthinking,
> The wolf of vows, is witless!

"Now, maiden, it may well be that in making that vow I was witless, but never will Alfgar the Saxon be named 'Wolf of Vows'! What I swear, that I do, so say no more on this matter. Now tell me something I have long wanted to know. How did Haldor, Harald's Iceland man, come to have so terrible a visage, broken in as it seems to be? Was it a wound?"

Sigrid, not a little ashamed of her hasty speech—for in that day it was accounted great shame, especially among Vikings, to break an oath of any sort—told him the story as they rode, and neither referred to the vow given Hrolf for many a long day thereafter.

"That tale of Haldor's face, Flamehair, is well known, and I wonder that you have not heard it before. Yes, it was a wound gained in a land the Greeks call Sicily, where Harald was a Viking with some of the Varangars, a year since. They were besieging a strong town, so strong that the townfolk would throw open the gates and mock Harald, bidding him enter. This they did in the hope that some of the Vikings would rush in, when the gates might be closed again and those inside slaughtered.

"But Harald bade the men go unharmed just out of arrow shot of the walls, and there carry on games and sports. This they did for many days, until one day the townfolk went to the walls to see the sports, and but few carried their weapons, deeming it useless. At this Harald bade his men wear swords beneath their cloaks, and after a little they made a sudden dash for the gates.

"The Varangars had no shielding armour, and the battle in the grass was sore indeed. The banner-bearer fell, and Harald ordered Haldor to take up the banner. Stones were raining down, and as Haldor picked up the staff he taunted Harald at fighting poorly. At that instant a stone struck his face, hurting it terribly. But Harald had rushed forward and Haldor followed him until the town was taken, and men say that it was the taunt which made Harald so wroth that none could stand before him that day. After that he made Haldor a captain under him."

"It was a brave deed," commented Alfgar dryly, "although I had as lief beard a bear unarmed as taunt Harald in the battle-heat. Dost think he really has a chance to recover Norway, Sigrid?"

"Yes," nodded the girl, earnestly. "I have heard that Magnus, his nephew and the son of Olaf the Holy, is ruling there now, having taken the land from the Danes and also having taken the Danish land from King Svein Wulfson. How true this is I know not; it is but rumour that came to Tsargrad a short while since."

For some time they had noted that the brook was growing larger and larger, and suddenly it made a sweep and emptied into a little river, almost hidden among the waving grasses. Alfgar had never before seen a river without trees, and he pulled up to look about him. As he did so, his companion seized his bridle quickly.

"Look, Flamehair! What is that glint of steel, there to the left?"

Alfgar followed her pointing finger, and without a word began to string his bow. The glint, rising and falling, was the flame of sun on steel, and almost as Sigrid spoke they could see a little band of warriors riding along in the distance, and coming towards them. Sigrid would have drawn back into shelter, but Alfgar stopped her.

"I am tired of fleeing," he said wearily. "Why fly from unknown dangers, Sigrid? Let them come; it is little harm they can do us, methinks."

(To be continued.)

From the painting by Robert Hillingford.] [*By permission of Messrs. B: Brooks & Sons.*

The fierce conflict between the Black Watch and French Lancers in a cornfield at Quatre Bras, two days before Waterloo.

"All That Was Left of Them"

The annals of the British Army teem with deathless stories of forlorn hopes and last stands against overwhelming odds. Some of the most thrilling and desperate of these are described in this article

By A. B. COOPER

IT is safe to say that no army in the world's history has such a varied record of heroism as the British. It has operated in every quarter of the globe, in tropic heat and arctic cold, against foes white, black, red, and yellow; in large masses as in the battles of Marlborough and Wellington, and in little expeditions for relief or punishment; and wherever it has gone and whatever it has done, often under conditions which have been a disgrace to the country which sent men insufficiently equipped, its spirit, loyalty, devotion, and heroism have never failed.

In this record of true courage there are many instances of supreme devotion, which have sometimes ended in annihilation and often in decimation, of stands against overwhelming odds, of attacks upon impossible positions, generally the result of some frightful blunder, yet proving invariably, if further proof were needed, that the spirit of the British race is indomitable.

Undoubtedly the most familiar episode of this kind in the annals of war is the thrice famous "Charge of the Light Brigade." It would have been famous in any case, but it owes something of its glamour and immortality to the fact that it inspired our great laureate, Alfred Tennyson, to pen one of the finest war-odes in the language. As long as Britons thrill to the record of brave deeds these lines will live, and the deed of arms they commemorate will be one of the chief glories of our race. We all know the poet's vivid description of the glorious charge, and now let us read that of an eyewitness of the great bravery of the six hundred:—

"As they passed towards the front, the Russians opened on them from the guns in the redoubt on the right, with volleys of musketry and rifles. They swept proudly past, glittering in the morning sun in all the pride and splendour of war. We could scarcely believe the evidence of our senses! Surely that handful of men were not going to charge an army in position? Alas! It was but too true; their desperate valour knew no bounds, and far indeed was it removed from its so-called better part—discretion.

"They advanced in two lines, quickening their pace as they closed towards the enemy. A more fearful spectacle was never witnessed than by those who, without the power to aid, beheld their heroic countrymen rushing to the arms of death. At the distance of 1,200 yards the whole line of the enemy belched forth, from thirty iron mouths, a flood of smoke and flame, through which hissed the deadly balls. Their flight was marked by instant gaps in our ranks, by dead men and horses, by steeds flying wounded or riderless across the plain.

"The first line is broken, it is joined by the second; they never halt or check their speed an instant; with diminished ranks, thinned by those thirty guns, which the Russians had laid with the most deadly accuracy, with a halo of flashing steel above their heads and with a cheer which was many a noble fellow's death cry, they flew into the smoke of the batteries; but ere they were lost to view the plain was strewn with their bodies, and with the carcasses of horses. They were exposed to an oblique fire from the batteries on both sides, as well as to a direct fire of musketry.

"Through the clouds of smoke we could see their sabres flashing as they rode up to the guns and dashed between them, cutting down the gunners as they stood. We saw them riding through the guns as I have said; to our delight we saw them returning, after breaking through a column of Russian infantry and scattering them like chaff, when the flank fire of the battery on the hill swept them down, scattered and broken as they were. Wounded men and dismounted troopers flying towards us told a sad tale; demi-gods could not have done what we failed to do." Six hundred and seventy

went "into the jaws of death" at Balaclava; only one hundred and ninety-eight returned.

In this same heroic but mistaken war with one of our present allies the battle of Inkermann was fought. During that fierce fight in the mist and drizzling rain against fearful odds, the cry was heard: "Die-hards, remember Albuera!" What did it mean? Who were the Die-hards, and why should they recall Albuera, the stubbornest and most sanguinary battle of the Peninsular War?

Not a single man of the famous 57th Regiment of Foot, now the 18th Battalion Middlesex Regiment, was at Albuera, and Captain Stanley, who led the Die-hards at Inkermann with the call to "Remember Albuera!" knew it. But he also knew that Albuera was the proudest name embroidered on the regimental colours, and that every man in the ranks knew that the famous nickname of the 57th was won there. The tradition had been passsd down from Albuera to Inkermann and it lives as fresh to-day as ever.

It would take too much space to tell the full story of Albuera. It must suffice to say that when Colonel Inglis fell in the full consciousness that annihilation stared his gallant command in the face, he called out: "Men of the 57th, die hard!" That they obeyed his dying injunction is sufficiently proved by the fact that the colonel, twenty-two officers, and more than four hundred men fell out of a total of five hundred and seventy, the remnant gathering round the flag and fighting off all comers, of whom the French lancers were the most formidable.

Now let Napier finish the story, one of the immortal episodes of Britain's book of glory. "Soon, however, Cole's fusiliers surmounted the hill, drove off the lancers, recovered five guns and one colour, and passed the right of Houghton's brigade precisely as Abercrombie passed the left. Such a gallant line issuing from the midst of the smoke, startled the enemy's masses, then augmenting and pressing onwards to an assured victory; they wavered, hesitated, and, vomiting forth a storm of fire, hastily endeavoured to enlarge their front, while a fearful discharge of grape from all their artillery whistled through the British ranks.

"The fusilier battalion, struck by the iron tempest, reeled and staggered like sinking ships; but suddenly and sternly recovering they closed on their terrible enemies, and then was seen with what a strength and majesty the British soldier fights. Nothing could stop that astonishing infantry. No sudden burst of undisciplined valour, no nervous enthusiasm weakened the stability of their order, their flashing eyes were bent on the dark columns in their front, their measured tread shook the ground, their dreadful volleys swept away the head of every formation, their deafening shouts overpowered the dissonant cries that broke from all parts of the tumultuous crowd, as slowly and with a horrid carnage it was pushed by the incessant vigour of the attack to the farthest edge of the height.

"There the French reserve, mixing with the struggling multitude, endeavoured to restore the fight, but only augmented the irremediable disorder, and the mighty mass, giving way like a crumbling cliff, went headlong down the steep; the rain flowed after in streams discoloured with blood, and eighteen hundred unwounded men, the remnant of six thousand unconquerable British soldiers, stood triumphant on the fatal hill!"

In the Peninsular War the 1st Battalion Essex Regiment, the famous 44th, received its nickname of the "Little Fighting Fours." On the retreat from Burgos they formed the rearguard and were reduced to forty-two men of all ranks fit for duty. It is related of this historic occasion that a sergeant came to an officer and said: "Sir, the mules and camp kettles are lost, but as I am the only man in the company left, it isn't of much consequence."

At Quatre Bras, a five-hour fight which preceded the real big battle near the tiny village of Waterloo, this regiment, associated with the Black Watch, the famous 42nd Royal Highlanders, bore the brunt of the fighting, which consisted mainly of attacks delivered by the French cavalry. In fact, during the later hours of this fierce battle, fought in a very small space consisting of a little wood and several cornfields, these two battalions joined forces and formed a single square, so reduced in numbers were they.

The 44th was engaged by a body of lancers in the rear whilst already engaged in front. They had not time to form a square in the orthodox way for receiving cavalry, so the rear rank faced round and succeeded in beating off the cavalry in the main, yet individual troopers dashed on with couched lances, and one of these rode straight at Ensign Christie—a name well known in the Essex Regiment—who carried one of the colours, drove his lance into him, and made

a grab at the precious colour. Christie, despite a frightful wound, dashed the flag to the ground and fell upon it. The lancer succeeded in tearing a piece out of it with his weapon and made off with it, but he was bayoneted, and the piece is still in the possession of the battalion.

Meanwhile the 42nd had also been caught in the rear among the growing corn, and were actually in the very heat and hurry of forming square from line when the lancers were in among them. Certainly the men of the 42nd closed round them and bayoneted all the Frenchmen who had entered the square, but the lancers died game, and in a few minutes the command of the 42nd devolved upon three officers in succession, after Colonel Macara had been killed. Nor was this the end of their troubles, for they had later to stand a galling rifle and artillery fire. The Black Watch lost in this summer evening battle in the cornfields 298 officers and men.

Their comrades of the 44th got off a little easier that day, but they were destined to pass through one of the most tragical experiences on record twenty-seven years later in Afghanistan. It was during that terrible retreat from Kabul in 1842, when out of 682 men of the 44th but fifty survived, wounded and prisoners. The last stand in the snow at Gundamuck, on a little hill among the mighty snow-capped peaks, is one of the best-known idylls of heroism in Britain's island story.

From the painting by C. E. Stewart. [*By permission of the Autotype Fine Art Co., Ltd.*

Into the Jaws of Death! The famous charge of the Light Brigade at Balaclava.

But it was not the last incident of the kind to take place in Afghanistan. Your fathers will remember well the disaster of Maiwand in 1880. General Primrose had been left in Candahar with something under five thousand troops of all ranks. In June intelligence arrived that Ayoub Khan, a claimant for the

From the painting by Frank Feller.] [*By permission of Messrs. Henry Graves & Co.*

The last stand at Maiwand, where for six hours the 66th (Berkshire) Regiment held their ground against countless numbers of Afghan rebels.

throne of Afghanistan, had gathered an enormous army and was marching on Candahar. The Indian Government directed General Burrows to take half the garrison of Candahar to meet this impending invasion.

On the 27th of July was fought the terrible battle of Maiwand. General Burrows does not appear to have had any idea of the force about to attack him, and he unwisely commenced the counter-attack with a force under

From the painting by W. B. Wollen, R.I. [*By permission of the Autotype Fine Art Co., Ltd.*

The last remnant of the 57th Regiment defending their flag at Albuera till help arrived. Their nickname "Die-Hards" was earned by their gallantry at this battle.

two thousand, only five hundred of whom were British—the fine fellows of the 66th—with twelve guns. His foe numbered twelve thousand at least and had thrice as many guns! For six mortal hours the British troops stood up to it, but although the 66th performed prodigies of valour, the end came when ammunition gave out. So out of a total of 2,476 engaged, 964 were killed outright, besides an additional 331 camp followers. The broken remnant reached Candahar, and it was to relieve the garrison thus depleted that "Bobs" made his famous march to Candahar, one of the most celebrated forced marches in the annals of our army, covering 320 miles of dreadful country in 23 days without the loss of a man!

Well do I remember the dreadful news of the disaster at Isandhlwana reaching this country from far-off Zululand, followed immediately by the immortal story of the defence of Rorke's Drift by a handful of Britons against innumerable hordes of the enemy. Is it not a wonderful tribute to the justice and clemency of our rule that the big black fellows who put up such a stern fight against

us in 1879 should now be asking, nay begging, to be allowed to help us against the European enemies of our vast Empire? Yet not more wonderful than the fact, which is an object lesson to the whole world, that the Boers of South Africa, whom we fought even more recently, are crowding to our flag to lend the Empire a hand in this titanic struggle.

I mention this because I am going to tell the story very briefly of two heroic episodes which occurred in wars against those who are now our staunch friends—Isandhlwana and Majuba Hill—two disasters to British arms separated by two brief years. On the 12th January, 1879, Lord Chelmsford crossed the Tugela, a river destined to figure prominently in a much more terrible war, between Natal and Zululand. The little army was divided into three columns, and it is with the one which crossed the river at Rorke's Drift that we are concerned. A small commissariat camp and hospital was left at the Drift in charge of Lieutenants Chard and Bromhead, and this centre column moved on to a spot called Isandhlwana, where Lord Chelmsford encamped.

On the morning of January 22nd he moved out of this camp, leaving it open and unprotected, most evidently under the impression that the Zulus would be cowed by this show of force, although it is said that he had been warned of their brave and even reckless character in warfare. In this unlaagered camp he left seven hundred British troops and about the same number of loyal natives, many of the latter camp followers and carriers. Towards midday a force of Zulus, estimated at twenty to twenty-five thousand, began to surround the unprotected camp, extending their flanks three miles or so on each side and rapidly drawing in.

Each man had seventy rounds of ammunition and as long as this lasted the British kept the Zulus at bay, standing back to back and firing until their rifles blistered their hands. The enemy fell in hundreds, but the odds were overwhelming. Wave succeeded wave, and though each was driven back broken there came a time when the last shot had been fired, and still another and another wave was ready to advance and engulf the band of devoted men.

Then came the last order: "Fix bayonets, men, and die like English soldiers!" Many accounts have been given of that last deadly struggle against total annihilation. The soldiers fought as only Britons can, dogged to the last. But it was a massacre in the end. The Zulus completely submerged them with numbers, and at close quarters their terrible assegais slaughtered them where they stood. When Lord Chelmsford, who was within sound of the firing, hurried back, he found a deserted camp and an army dead and mutilated. Only a few mounted men escaped across the river, and it was well they did, for it was two of these fugitives who remembered the little base camp at Rorke's Drift and rode hard to warn it of the approaching avalanche of wildly excited Zulus. Instant preparations were made for defence, the fortifications consisted mainly of mealie bags and biscuit tins! Let me now quote from an excellent book entitled "Heroes of Britain," by the late Edwin Hodder.

"Every man was instructed in the particular post he was to occupy; and at the end of a couple of hours swarms of Zulus, their hands red with the blood of their conquered enemies, pushed forward from the south and dashed towards that apparently weak little band in overwhelming numbers. But their onslaught was arrested by a heavy and well-directed fire. Again and again the Zulus rushed forward, and again they had to fall back. Then they took cover whilst others swept round to the rear. But from every point they occupied they were, after desperate struggles, repulsed.

"Maddened at this failure after their recent victory, they banded together in vast numbers, and moved up so closely as to touch the muzzles of the guns of the besieged. Then came a hand to hand encounter—bayonet and assegai. For a time the gallant defenders were obliged to retire behind their biscuit boxes; then the hospital was set on fire and the critical moment of the struggle came. Room after room was defended, the sick who were able to stand taking part in the defence..

"All through that evening and all through that night the gallant little band of 139 kept three thousand Zulus at bay, and at four in the morning the foe gave up the contest, having lost more than three times the total number of the besieged." The magnificent defence of Chard and Bromhead saved Natal from a savage invasion; Britain rang with their praise, and the great Queen conferred upon both that most coveted of all distinctions the Victoria Cross. And never was it better earned. In the same war Major Redvers Buller, a name beloved by all Devonians, also

won the cross for averting what might easily but for his prompt action, have ended in a second disaster.

On the top of Majuba Hill is a big stone upon which are carved the words: "Here Colley Fell." Thereby hangs a tale of heroism and disaster. For we know that there was a Boer War prior to the one which some of you now can "just remember." This was in 1881, and Sir George Colley, the governor of Natal, made the mistake which cost this country so much nineteen years later, in thinking that with a force of a thousand men or so he could easily subdue the Dutch farmers. He attempted to force the pass of Laing's Nek, but, outnumbered by two to one and also opposed by an entrenched foe, he was repulsed with heavy loss.

Sir Evelyn Wood, that famous old South African fighter, was hurrying up with reinforcements, but instead of waiting for these, the brave Colley attempted a reconnaissance towards Newcastle with three hundred men. His force was surrounded near the Ingogo River and two hundred out of three hundred were killed or wounded.

Then Colley determined on his master stroke. He left his camp with six hundred men and in the darkness of the night climbed to the top of Majuba Hill, which dominates the pass of Laing's Nek at an elevation of two thousand feet. Now, had he had a field-gun or two up there this move would have been a master stroke indeed, for it would have put the Boer camp at his mercy. In fact, when the Boers saw the British up there, their first impulse was to "trek" with all speed. But, when their camp was not shelled, they tumbled to the situation, and, with a heroism which none will deny, they made up their minds to storm the hill.

You see, they were on their native heath. Climbing rugged hillsides and dodging behind rocks in search of game was child's-play to the Boers. They actually reached the crest almost without a casualty, for the British on the top could not get a proper sight of them as they climbed. The British were completely routed and their commander was shot through the head. Of the little devoted band who fought as long as they could stand, 92 officers and men were killed, 134 wounded, and 57 taken prisoners.

But, whether in success or failure, in victory or defeat, the British soldier has ever shown that he is made of tough stuff. He has always been a very hard nut to crack. In the present war we have already seen many instances of what a British force, outnumbered but never disheartened, can do. Time and again the German legions have been broken by a comparative handful of General French's men. Time and again it has been the same old story of one against a score, living up to the laurels their fathers won before them, gaining new glories, and adding fresh chapters to the magnificent story of our Army's deathless deeds.

> Handful of men as we were, we were
> English in heart and in limb;
> Strong with the strength of the race to
> command, to obey, to endure,
> Each of us fought as if hope for the
> garrison hung but on him;
> And ever upon the topmost roof, our
> banner of England blew.

The High Master of St. Paul's

THE REV. A. E. HILLARD, D.D.

ST. PAUL'S, as a public school, has peculiarities, if slight ones. Here, for example, the Head is known as High Master or, more colloquially and not less reverently, by one Pauline to another, as The Highman. The post is now held by the Rev. Albert Ernest Hillard, D.D., who was appointed to succeed Mr. Walker on the latter's retirement in 1905. As a scholar of Christ Church, Dr. Hillard took a first in both Mods and Greats at Oxford, and in order to come to St. Paul's he resigned the head mastership of Durham School, which post he had held since 1899. Previously he had been for ten years assistant master and chaplain of Clifton College, to which school he had been appointed immediately after taking his degree. A distinguished scholar, he has contributed a number of classical and Biblical text-books to meet the needs of our public schools, and one of the first changes which followed his appointment to St. Paul's was the introduction of the new pronunciation of Latin. Subsequently he turned his attention to the strengthening of the modern side of the school, and additional science and language masters were appointed.

During the school quatercentenary celebrations, which took place when Dr. Hillard had been at St. Paul's four years, £10,000 was spent in building six new science laboratories. Since then other new buildings have been erected, including new lavatories and changing rooms, new fives courts, and an underground rifle range, the latter as a direct result of Dr. Hillard's wish that shooting should be made compulsory at the school. In addition, the new High Master's strong personality made for the revival of the prefectoral system which had been obsolete for some twenty years.

Although his own career has not unnaturally been marked more distinctly by scholastic successes than by athletic achievements, Dr. Hillard is nevertheless a firm supporter of school games, and is keenly interested in the undoubtedly increasing reputation of St. Paul's as a rowing school, and in the exceptional merit of Paulines as boxers and swimmers, whilst, although not recently favoured by fortune at Bisley, the school has a universal shooting average showing a competence amongst the boys highly satisfactory at the present time. On the other hand, Dr. Hillard's personal and painstaking encouragement to those who seek honours at the Universities is a real and happy support to boys who in after years may possibly be numbered amongst his distinguished pupils. Last term, as it happens, two such boys attained the honour of becoming scholars of Balliol, an unusual distinction for one school.

But whilst it is in the achievements and the known general atmosphere of a public school that the character of its Head becomes, in a sense at all events, most apparent, it is in the memories of Old Boys that one must delve for live instances of his real personality. Knowing the High Master, one must feel that there is about him a certain inborn dignity too real a part of the man to be assumed. It is the quiet dignity which, cloaking knowledge, commands respect and gives, in this instance, an especial weight to the well-reasoned decisions necessary of a Head; and perfect satisfaction to those who, seeking advice, may feel that they have asked and been granted the aid of one possessing a thorough insight and a real, if not too palpable, sense of sympathy. Dr. Hillard will perhaps be remembered by old boys more by reason of his ever helping hand than on account of any mailed fist policy; a certain considered guidance shows more decidedly in his manner towards a boy than direct insistence, but there is, when all is said, that dignity about his judgment which of itself carries weight, a probity which takes the place of the patent forcefulness more usual in such men.

He has the strength of character of a distinguished leader, a wisdom born of a wide range of thought, and, perhaps, in the end, the essence and the sincerity of his character lies in the fact that the Rev. Dr. Hillard is a very gifted scholar and a very human gentleman.

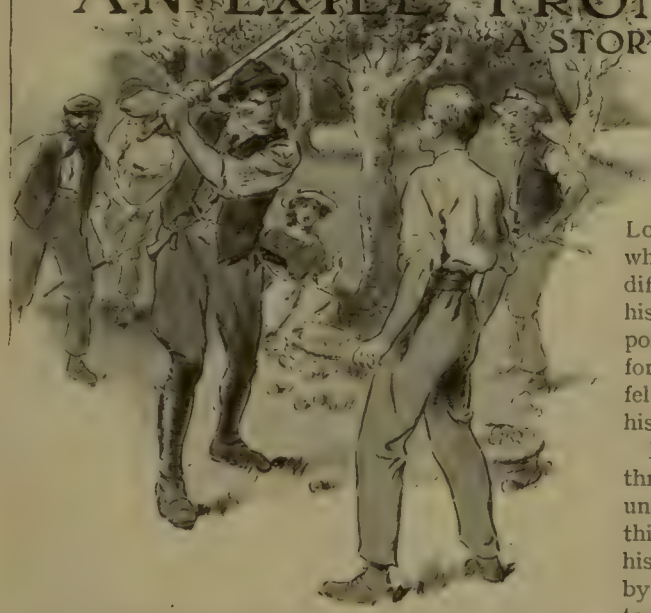
HYLTON CLEAVER.

The Rev. A. E. Hillard, D.D., High Master of St. Paul's School.

AN EXILE FROM SCHOOL.

A STORY OF RUGBY FOOTBALL.

By Gunby Hadath.



Before Juggie could defend himself, Budge seized the pole and aimed a heavy blow at his head.

WHEN Major Barkworth bade good-bye to his son at Lowbrough he gave him two fingers to shake, a half-sovereign for each of his trouser pockets, and an injunction to bear everything that turned up with a smiling face. Then the major stepped into his cab; and the small boy at the porter's lodge waved timidly. But his father's head was not thrust out of the window.

For at that instant he was drawing a long breath of relief that he had discharged an irksome duty without sentiment. Major Barkworth did not approve of any show of sentiment; it did not, he thought, fit a fellow for the stern realities of life. Three days afterwards he shipped again for India, and the boy was left behind in a strange land to obey his father's wishes as best he could.

To the boy, born in India and brought up among an obsequious little court of native dependents, the school seemed very odd and cold and lonely. Yet from the onset he set in practice his father's precept—to bear everything that turned up with a smiling face; and this he did not always from sheer purpose so much as because he could not help himself.

Juggie Barkworth had been endowed, in literal language, with a face that always was smiling, and always would smile. He had been fashioned also with a disposition to match. Lowbrough very speedily discovered that while it was not difficult to annoy this diffident youngster, not difficult to raise his temper, it was a matter of utter impossibility to depress his cheerful appearance for five minutes. If ever in his exile he felt unhappy, his face was never party to his feelings.

Before he had been at the school for three full terms, he had shaken, not uncomfortably, into the ruck. During this period he heard three times from his father, and three times he answered by return (he had not, alas! a mother to tell his secrets to). His letters narrated the school's doings in affairs of sport, reported with fidelity his own progress in class, omitted any difficulties encountered, and concluded at the bottom of the sheet with the formal expression of his love and duty. Conscientious compilations these, from which all sparks of feeling were eliminated. They were the models of the major's own.

And Juggie had not been two years at Lowbrough before he had lifted his head and shoulders out of the ruck, and found a niche in which he began to fit. Physically he had filled out surprisingly. As impossible as ever to depress, his cheerfulness was now carrying infection. And his absurd name had ceased to sound ridiculous. It had become instead a nickname of affection. Again during this second year did Juggie hear three times from his father, and thrice punctiliously he replied. In the January of his third year he might have added that he had scraped somehow on to Big Side at Rugger, but he refrained from doing so.

On Big Side he was showing himself this January the most likely material for a wing three-quarter. He was very fast; he had a natural swerve; his hands were safe at fielding or taking a pass; nothing seemed to flurry his cool head. And he was exhibiting an instinct for the finesse of the game which led Matters, who captained the Fifteen, to remark to Blake, who would captain in Juggie's fourth year,

that nothing in the world which *he* could see would keep him out of the school side next season. "And making him," Blake added without jealousy, "about the hottest wing we've ever had."

"If he goes on at this rate—yes," admitted Matters.

But neither Blake nor Matters had second sight.

Juggie's niche was now secured to him, and when to the spring term the summer succeeded, if Major Stone had asked for a photograph he might have failed to recognise his strapping son. Physically, Juggie had made splendid progress, and all other progress seemed as well assured. But in this summer term disaster came.

On the fringe of the cricket eleven, but not quite in it, he was invited one day by Palmer, a year his junior, to play against the town for a scratch team which a certain irresponsible Old Boy was getting up. Neither of the two had any reason to know that the sparkling and irresponsible O.B. aforesaid had recently lost favour in the eyes of their head master. So, without clue to the brusque refusal which was all their request for permission met with, they deemed the Head unjust and arbitrary, for the match was to be played on the half-term whole holiday, when the second eleven did not happen to be engaged, and when, too, a larger measure of liberty was traditionally allowed to one and all.

The smart of injustice was stinging Palmer, but Juggie would have smiled the matter off if the other had not first tempted and then taunted him.

"Juggie," he insisted, "there's no call-over that day. There never is, you know, on half-term whole. The match doesn't begin till two o'clock. We can slip down and be back before lock-up."

"I think not," Juggie said, and smiled.

"Old man, I took you for a sportsman! It isn't as if we weren't always allowed to spend the day more or less as we like. We'll slip down, and play under false names."

"Oh, no," Juggie answered, dubiously.

"You funk it!" Palmer rapped.

The two played; they did not escape the inevitable discovery; they had no excuse to plead before the Head.

When the Man had discoursed for some while on disobedience, he inquired which of them was the elder.

"I am, sir," replied Juggie, raising eyes of shame.

"Then, Barkworth, you are clearly the more to blame. You have led a younger boy than yourself astray."

Astonished that Palmer did not controvert this, and alive for the first time to the age argument, Juggie took the accusation without a word. It seemed cowardly to try to shift the blame by pointing out that the other had persuaded him.

He heard his fellow culprit dismissed with an appropriate penalty. He heard himself bidden gravely to stay behind.

And when the study door was closed again, the Man's voice seemed to issue from a mist.

"Barkworth, it's impossible for me to overlook this. Your father is coming to England in July. I shall then suggest to him that he removes you."

Juggie gulped, and tried to open his lips, but his tongue was sticking to the roof of his mouth. Into his eyes crept the mute pain of a suddenly stricken creature as he gazed for one full moment at the Head—and then the old unwitting smile came wanly. It was not that Juggie felt at all like smiling, but because Nature, brought up with a jerk, found relief upon the line of least resistance. If Juggie had not smiled, he would have collapsed.

But the Head's heart hardened when he saw it.

"Go," he commanded, coldly. "That is all."

And Juggie went. He found Palmer maudlin with self-commiseration.

"Juggie," he moaned, "shall I tell him I suggested it?"

"No," Juggie answered; "no, I wouldn't do that. After all, I am the elder, as he said." And after a long silence, which seemed hours, he muttered furiously under his breath that now he would never wear his Rugger cap.

When Major Barkworth arrived towards the end of term his handling of the case was characteristic. With no more sentiment to spare for his son's transgression than for anything else which appertained to him, he eyed the boy's broad shoulders and strong figure with a remark that he had only himself to blame.

"You're big enough to shift for yourself," he said. "Now, what would you like to turn your hand to next?"

"I don't mind," Juggie answered.

A little sentiment might have evoked a different response; a little natural affection must have brought out the whole story. But it ended in the station fly for both of them,

on a wet morning while the school was working. Neither showed any evidence of dejection, but one, at least, was feeling it acutely.

For this fashion of bidding good-bye to Lowbrough was very different from the fashion of Juggie's dreams. He had dreamed of going hence in normal course, with some laurels maybe and his Rugger cap, and possibly his name upon the honour boards. He had dreamed so much at one time and another. And here it ended.

His father had come over on business with the War Office, with only one brief fortnight to spend in England. But the time sufficed to settle Juggie's future, towards which the shock had left him apathetic.

"Then since you don't care what you do," the major said, "it's clear you're not cut out for very much. We'll decide when I come home for my long leave next spring. But till then, lad, I'll keep you out of mischief."

"Yes," said Juggie, listening without interest.

"There's a farming man at Chesworthy in Cornwall with whom I'll put you for these next nine months. You've had your chance at a public school, and missed it. We'll see now what you can do at farming."

"Yes," said Juggie, in the same dull tone.

So, the day before the major left for India, he took his son down to the farm in Cornwall, and this happened also to be the day on which Lowbrough broke up. From morning until night Juggie thought of them.

Farmer Rossiter, of Chesworthy, was a large, brisk, florid man with ferrety eyes which gainsaid a certain heartiness of face and manner. He called himself a square man who hated shams; and his son Budge, a lout of twenty, called himself a chip of the old block. In pursuance of this pose, perhaps, or from inherent aversion to refinement in any form, these two made no pretence from the first of liking Juggie, whom they regarded rather as a young cub to be warded than as a pupil to be instructed in agriculture.

On his side the boy was equally frank. He did willingly whatever the farmer told him, made no demur when they put him into corduroys, but similarly he admitted to no pleasure in taking his meals with the farm-hands in the kitchen, or in the rough work he was called upon to do.

But it was his smile which always annoyed Rossiter.

When the lout, Budge, put him on a nasty colt one morning, which threw him dangerously, Juggie rose and brushed his knees and smiled. This sent the frightened farmer away, fuming. He reflected that the boy had not a spark of spirit; in his place, he'd have lammed that colt till it was silly, or lammed the man who put him on to it. And when (to adopt his own expression) he gave the rough side of his tongue to Juggie before the farm-hands, and again the only answer was a smile, Rossiter felt confirmed in his opinion, and from that moment bullied his pupil more. It is true that he found him with no inclination for the life, but he forgot that Juggie had never professed any.

Three intolerable weeks had been spent at Chesworthy, when a chance word which a shearer dropped inclined Juggie to view his hosts more kindly. Father and son, he learned, were keenly interested in the local football club, which, thanks to them, had made a name in the county. Old Rossiter supported it with his purse; Budge Rossiter with his personal prowess. And when Juggie heard this he rejoiced, believing that he had found a common link. His heart warmed, and he talked long with the shearer about football.

But unhappily it came to the farmer's ears that the boy had been chattering instead of working. Forthwith he baited Juggie, as his manner was, affirming that a fellow who was "scared of seein' a pig slaughtered weren't likely to have stomach enough for futba'." His son Budge and the surrounding company agreed that this was only common sense.

"And hang y'!" Rossiter exploded, when Juggie's smile increased his exasperation. "Hang y'! Have you *tried* to play, I'm askin'? Now, have y'?"

His coarseness sickened the boy, who was in no mood to provoke an argument by defending his skill.

"No, I don't play football," he answered, very quietly.

And this the farmer twisted deftly.

"Y' don't!" he cried. "You with such limbs on you! You chicken-hearted cub, what can y' do?"

"I? Nothing," Juggie answered with a smile.

From this moment, under the constant taunts of Rossiter and his son, and with no congenial society for relief, his life became more wretched, till he grew to loathe the farm and all upon it. Whatever he became eventually, he brooded, he would never, never, please heaven, become a farmer. The prospect of developing into a lout like Budge was one which made him shudder to contemplate.

Like all captives and solitary souls he was dropping into the habit of talking to himself. And often at the end of some day's drudgery, when he felt desperately driven to write to his father, aching to be taken from this fell place, he would clench his fists as he paced his little attic, and bid himself :—

" Juggie, don't grizzle. Stick it out."

And sometimes he would go on in a rapid undertone, " You owe the pater some amends for being booted from Lowbrough. The least you can do now is to stick this out."

So neither growl nor murmur crossed the seas in written word. Yet the most honest resolutions have been foiled. In every state of over-tension comes a time when something must snap somewhere or the whole structure goes, and this time came to Juggie presently, on the second of two days' labour in the apple orchards. For hours under a devouring sun, from which the gnarled trees gave but paltry shelter, he had been helping the old men past more active work to beat the apples down with their long poles. For Farmer Rossiter clung to the ancient fashion. And from tree to tree the crouching maids were passing, to gather the fallen fruit into their baskets.

Care had to be taken at this task that the clumsy pole should hit the branches only, lest any of the apples be struck and bruised; and Budge Rossiter, striding in towards evening, saw the pole slip from Juggie's aching arms.

The heat had been intolerable; the temper of the farmer's son was at its worst. In a trice, before Juggie could defend himself, Budge snatched the heavy pole and lashed him with it; it descended on his forehead and drove him staggering. When one of the maids exclaimed indignantly, Budge turned and upbraided her at the top of his voice.

The placid orchard was hideously transformed. The old men dropped their poles, the women their baskets; but their sense of servitude and fear of their master's son were both too strong for any to interfere. White as a sheet, the girl endeavoured to put her fingers to her ears, but Budge clutched her wrist, and his angry words were pouring on, when Juggie, one hand to his forehead and moving like a creature dazed, lurched forward and bade him leave the girl alone.

Budge twisted round with an ugly word.

" Dry up, you beast! Dry up!" said Juggie.

" I'll smash——"

The bully got no farther, for Juggie sprang and hit him cleanly and squarely between the eyes. Then, as Budge collapsed, he picked his coat up and walked out of the orchard. None of them attempted to keep him back.

In the same dazed, semi-conscious fashion he climbed to his little attic under the eaves, and, after bathing his aching head for a few moments, took his purse out of a drawer and, from the mantelpece on which it always stood, the miniature of his dearly loved mother. With these he went quietly downstairs.

He met no one as he opened the gate in the farmyard and passed through on to the long, white road. He went mechanically, with only one idea—to get as far away as possible from Chesworthy. And his head was aching still, and throbbing.

When Farmer Rossiter was informed next morning that his pupil was missing and that his bed had not been slept in, he laughed uneasily and declared that the boy sulked; that a night in the open did nobody any harm; that the lad would come back when his stomach was empty. His son growled, " Us be well shut o' un."

But the day passed, and another, and the runaway had not returned to the farm.

Rossiter felt alarm now, and spoke of raising the county. But when Budge argued that the fugitive had sufficient start and money to carry him as far as he wished by rail, his father satisfied himself with a perfunctory search of the immediate neighbourhood and a few inquiries at adjacent farms. These proving unavailing, he sat down to write a long letter to Major Barkworth, which painted in full colours the boy's ingratitude and idleness and complete uselessness. But being a prudent man, the farmer added also his cheque for the balance of the fees which had been paid in advance; with which he wiped his hands of the whole business. As Budge had said, they were " well shut " of Juggie.

The harvest fields were ripening for the sickle; they murmured, when the light wind rippled through them, as the sea murmurs at the still of evening. It was beside the kindly corn, to such a lullaby, that Juggie spent his first night under the sky, ten miles, as he could judge, from Chesworthy. The chitter of the harvest-mice awakened him, and he tramped on.

He had no plans, no definite aim. His head was painful still, his mind inactive; he felt conscious of little but a vast, strange sense of freedom. His sole intention was to keep this liberty.

But presently he was conscious, too, of hunger, and he bought himself some breakfast at an inn. There a count of his money revealed more than forty shillings; yet later, when he passed a little station, he felt no desire to proceed by train.

"Besides, where could I go if I went by train?" he said.

That night he slept beneath a rick; perfectly peaceful, placidly content. Next morning the aching of his head had subsided to a sense of heaviness, but while his mental alertness seemed to have gone he retained a vivid satisfaction with his liberty. He washed himself wherever he found water, and tramped or rested as the fancy moved him. He ate at inns.

At this stage it is clear that he must have passed for an ordinary labouring lad upon the road. His speech would have betrayed a gentler station, but he answered when addressed in monosylfables, and all his talking was done to himself. As for instance, on the sixth day when, finding his money dwindling, he came, to a dead halt in a lane, and remarked quite suddenly and savagely:—

"But not back to Chesworthy. No, never."

It was three days later, when his last penny had gone, and when with many digressions by the way he approached the border-line of Cornwall and Devon, that he fell in with an itinerant tinker and knife-grinder, with whom he shared his dinner under a hedge. The man was old and wizened, his cheeks the colour and texture of tanned leather, and his shrewd eyes had watched Juggie while they ate.

"Lad, you're in trouble?" he said, lighting his pipe.

Juggie's old smile returned as he shook his head.

"No, I'm out of trouble," he answered, slowly.

The tinker nodded a sympathetic head, and puffed his pipe in silence for a while.

"What were you in trouble for?" he asked at last.

"For making a fool of myself," said Juggie, placidly, reminded of a certain cricket match.

"And where be you bound now?"

But Juggie's only answer was a shrug.

Rising painfully to his weary legs, the old man eyed his heavy knife-grinding machine with disgust. "I'm beat," he said. "But I've got to push a long step before nightfall."

"Shall I shove the thing along for you?" said Juggie.

And this offer ended in a strange companionship; for the pair grew to like each other, and while the younger acted as the beast of burden they trudged from village to village, and sharpened knives and sickles for the coming harvest. The takings were meagre, but a third of these were scrupulously doled out to Juggie, and ever at nightfall his companion found some resting-place beneath a roof for them. And the sun browned Juggie, and the road hardened him; he grew lean, and tireless, and strong as steel.

Forgetting Chesworthy and pining less for Lowbrough, he was happy in an apathetic fashion. The contentment of "the road" was settling on him. August had gone and September was well in, when this odd comradeship came to a forced end. For now they passed to village after village to find the cottages and sleepy streets nigh empty. Men and women, all had gone out to the reaping, and the children had followed after to glean.

A man whom they encountered one evening, drowsing home on a great wain, stopped his horses to eye Juggie up and down, and offered him employment in the harvest fields. So it came about that he bade good-bye to his friend, not without a pang on either side, and the next day saw him with the harvesters, a handkerchief round his forehead to ward off the sun. Whereafter there was fare for all at the farmstead, and soft quarters in a cosy barn.

So Juggie spent long days in the fields, and long nights of dreamless, re-creating sleep. He worked well and earned his master's respect, and wished, it may be, that harvest could last for ever. Yet the noon came when the last wagon had been loaded, and he ran behind and hailed it with the rest, as it rocked its way over the furrowed field and turned into the deep lane for the rickyard.

But the sense of loneliness stole back poignantly. To-morrow they would need him no longer.

"Where now?" he asked himself next mid-day, when he stood with his wages in his pocket upon the little tor beyond the village. On every side the same sight met his eyes tramped stubble and blackening straw where a week ago the golden corn was waving. And berries now where summer had once hung blossom, and the field-flowers gone, and already, as it seemed to him just then, the colder breath of autumn in his nostrils. A grey drizzle began to fall while he pondered, as though to emphasise the fact that summer was dead.

"Where next?" he asked himself the second time.

"Anywhere—except to Chesworthy."

II

THE Reverend Robert Vanstone, curate-in-charge of Staunton-under-Regis, stood at the window of his little Cornish parsonage and moodily eyed the dreary October weather. He was a young man, barely arrived at thirty, but white hairs were gathering plentifully at his temples, and lines of care were creeping across his brow. He would have told his parishioners frankly, had they asked him, that they were responsible for both.

His lips were humorous, his figure taller than ordinary, yet he stooped now as he had never stooped three years ago when, full of zeal, he had come to this lonely *cure*. What great schemes he had burned with those days to awaken and restore the Church life which under a predecessor past his work had, unhappily, been suffered to run to seed. He had met with apathy, indifference, neglect. His great schemes still beat against these vainly.

A little headway? Yes, but what a little, he communed, as he gazed out of his window, and wondered if his latest enterprise, a football club to keep the young men out of mischief, would turn out any better than the rest. But his spirits suffered under these dreary October skies, and he was beginning to despair of his football club.

He sighed, and turned from the window to take his hat. It was the hour of the usual Thursday practice; how many, he pondered, would turn up to-day?

But when he reached the meadow below the glebe, where with his own hands he had raised the tall posts and cross-bars, he found there were not sufficient yet to make two sides, till presently, when a few more straggled up, he began to coach his charges in forward play. He showed them how to pack and wheel a scrum, and something of the old-time joy returned to him, for the Reverend Robert had come near his Blue at Cambridge.

Yet constantly his attention was distracted to a stranger who hung wistfully on the touch-line, a solitary figure following all their movements. His boots were down at heel, his clothes were ragged—and Mr. Vanstone wondered who he might be, and whence he came, and what he was doing there. A likely looking youth, he commented; but down upon his luck, poor fellow, obviously.

"But won't you join us?" the good man invited, when he marked how keenly this vagrant followed their play. The other shook his head and turned away, at the moment that a mighty kick from the blacksmith sent the ball bouncing and bounding after him. He swooped round, and returned it into play with a raking, cleanly taken drop.

"My word! A player!" ejaculated Mr. Vanstone.

The Reverend Robert was a man of action. Bidding his pupils finish by themselves, in a trice he had his arm within the vagrant's.

"I'm not going to apologise," he exclaimed, "because I am the parson of this parish, sir. You seem to be roughing it a bit, and it's my duty to ask if I can help. Come, the parsonage is only a step away."

The stranger glanced at his own boots and rags—and smiled. "No, thanks, I'm quite all right," he said, in a voice that shook a little as he ended.

"Well, I'm a bachelor," came the quick reply. "There's nobody to quiz your get-up, you know. And I'd like you to have a cup of tea with me."

An odd invitation, oddly enough conveyed, but many agencies were working to support it. One was the arm of the Church Militant still tucked very firmly in the other's; a second was the ring of his honest voice; and a third, how many wistful memories and longings wakening in an exiled heart! And the last, stark hunger.

"I'm not fit to be seen anywhere decent."

"That," said Mr. Vanstone, "is easily remedied."

Over the teacups, when the curtains were drawn and the light from the shaded lamp was glowing warmly, bit by bit the tale of a month's wandering was drawn from the Reverend Robert's guest. It was an Odyssey ignoble enough in itself, yet not without its phase that made it splendid. No weather, no vicissitudes, no heart-ache had mastered that one grim purpose—to "stick it out."

"And you a mere boy!" cried its auditor. "You've taken any odd jobs to carry you on. And when you couldn't find one, you've footed it."

The other nodded.

"What's your name?"

"I lost that long ago," said Juggie, queerly. "I mean—I like to think it lost, at present."

"I beg your pardon. Yes, I understand. Well, now I want you to do an odd job for me."

"And that, sir?"

"To play Rugger for me on Saturday."

"Rugger!" Juggie's eyes shone, but his exclamation was succeeded by a look of pain.

"You're kind, sir, but I must push on," he faltered, and rose, and looked round for his shabby cap.

But his host most cheerily thumped him on the chest, and pushed him back into his chair again.

"No, I'm not offering you charity," he said, "I'm not asking you to play Rugger as a sham. You won't be begging—don't you be afraid of it. You're booked for a bed here to-night in any case, and for the loan of a new rig out—that's settled. But I want you very badly to play footer. You do play?"

"I used to," said Juggie, quietly.

"I know it. Now, as a gentleman and an old public school man, as I think you are, I want to put my side of the case to you. I'm trying to drum some life into this village of mine, and, among other things, I've started a football club. But I haven't kindled any enthusiasm yet. It's enthusiasm I want, enthusiasm"—he leaned forward and thumped the table heavily—"for once I get my folk to enthuse over anything I'm on the road at last to stirring them up. This football club is one means to that end. You follow?"

Juggie nodded. "But——"

"No, let me finish; hear the logic of it. We're playing an ambitious match on Saturday, and if we're drubbed I'm afraid our club will break up. They're slack enough already. You saw how few turned out for practice to-day. But if we could win on Saturday—if we could win, they'll enthuse at last, they'll grow keen—and *I'll* be winning. There! I've shown my heart to you. Will you take my job?"

The Reverend Robert had forgotten to stoop; three years were slipping from his shoulders, as he stood and eyed this flotsam gentleman whom he believed that Providence had sent to him. "You play three-quarter?" he asked, eagerly.

"I did," said Juggie.

"Then you'll do my job? You'll help me to beat Chesworthy?"

A hoarse cry broke from the boy before him.

"Oh, no!" he murmured, shuddering.

"But why not, why not?" pleaded his host, anxiously, in ignorance of all that had preceded the month's wandering. "The match is here. They're driving over the moor in a brake to us."

And when Juggie saw how much this kindly spirit was set on it, he told himself that he must stick this out. He must stifle his haunting, dumb-animal fear of the Rossiters, and if Farmer Rossiter came over with the team and claimed him, he would go and make another effort to endure them. For play he must, whatever happened.

"I'll take your job," he said, with a flash of the old smile.

The Reverend Robert glanced at his rack of pipes; he chose one, then put it down again. "And I'll play, too," he said; "so no more smoking. It's five years since I had a jersey on." He slapped his chest, and jerked his shoulders back. "My Flotsam Gentleman we're going to teach them enthusiasm!"

"Your what, sir?" Juggie was laughing.

"My Flotsam Gentleman! You don't mind, do you? You see, it's the only name I know you by. And now we must rig you out and feed you up."

When the Chesworthy Fifteen alighted from their brake on Saturday the first sight Juggie set eyes upon was that of Farmer Rossiter, clambering ponderously down from the box-seat. He saw Juggie, too, a moment later, but at first he failed to recognise the lad, so changed and keen he looked in knickers and jersey. Presently the farmer drew nearer with bulging eyes, and his jaw dropped as he beckoned Budge.

"It's 'un!" he whispered in a tone of awe, not quite certain whether he saw a ghost.

"I spotted un five minutes since," sneered Budge. "Whato! They must be hard up here for futba'ers! My sakes, I'll give un a shaking!"

His father rushed at Juggie with upraised stick, crying for all to hear that the lad was a runaway, so that commotion threatened among the onlookers when the Church Militant strode forward and interposed. The farmer's indictment, spluttered with furious mouthings, completed for him what was lacking in Juggie's Odyssey.

"But, Mr. Rossiter, you're a sportsman," he argued, at his wits' end how to prevent a scene. "Let's play our game first, and discuss this afterwards."

"Oh, aye," agreed Rossiter. "But hang y'! He can't play!"

"He's going to *try*," was the quiet answer. "Is your son ready? Then we'll toss."

The farmer withdrew grimly with his touch flag; but his son, who had not forgotten a certain blow between the eyes, was rejoicing that the time for repayment had come. He paused an instant, before he kicked the ball off, to mark Juggie on the locals' right wing.

Staunton in their black knickers and dark green jerseys looked lighter than the scarlet men from Chesworthy, who were not regarding this game as quite serious, but rather more in the light of a beanfeast than a match. The drive across the moor and back again had been the main attraction in their eyes.

The start was sensational enough. The visitors began by pushing Staunton off the ball, and the game was well inside the latter's half when the Reverend Robert was seen to intercept a pass. He broke away within a few yards of touch, and his tall figure swayed from side to side as he glanced for somebody to throw the ball to. But on he went, while one or two of the other side made half-hearted attempts to stop him; still on, and now resisting a genuine tackle, his great strength seeming to carry him through, he had crossed the half-way line, and still went on.

It is clear that the Chesworthy three-quarters expected him to pass, or else misjudged the pace that he was gathering. For somehow—and nobody quite saw how—he brushed past them, and shouldered the full back. His weight had taken him over with a try in the corner!

"Soft," is the term which Farmer Rossiter applied to that try, and certainly it merited the term. Perhaps the defenders thought that the heaviest forward on the ground was incapable of running full speed for eighty yards. Still, these things do happen in football—and, the goal-kick failing, Staunton were three points to the good in as many minutes.

Their gallant parson's prowess did wonders for his side. The seven he led now credited him with an invincibility which would have amused him had he read their minds. With him to lead them they would walk round Chesworthy!

Of course, they paid the penalty of over-confidence. The visitors set to with a will, and soon, when Juggie, who was still out of touch with the game and unwontedly nervous, misfielded a long kick and failed to recover, the scarlet jerseys swept over him in a body, and a half-back picked it up and nipped across. Budge took the kick, and made the three points five.

Mr. Vanstone mopped his streaming face, and nodded cheeringly to Juggie as he walked the ball out. A very disconsolate nod was the response, for the Flotsam Gentleman knew that he had presented the enemy with that

With a raking, cleanly-taken drop, the stranger returned the ball into play.

goal, and still was feeling like a fish out of water.

But magnificently fit, and hard, and strong, the open skies, the field life, and the weeks of toil were repaying now the debt they owed his body. Mother Nature herself had looked after his training, and turned out her perfect physical machine.

Perfectly fit—and yet his talent had left him. This was apparent only an instant later, when a pass which his sure hands would never have dropped at Lowbrough went begging now and all but brought disaster. With a fly kick into touch he staved that off, but he felt humiliated, and more nervous.

The Reverend Robert kept his forwards at it, and led them in a succession of loose rushes, where their ardour and recklessness might have spelled a score if they had not kicked too hard when they neared the line. Nor could the halves behind them open the game out; they hung on too long, and used the touchline too much. For twenty minutes Juggie was practically neglected.

This local onslaught wearing itself out, the scarlet jerseys began to take charge of the game. They got the ball in the scrum incessantly, and it became obvious that their outsides knew what to do with it. Thrice, after smartish passing, their left wing sailed supremely down on Juggie, who, to the stupefaction of old Rossiter upon the line, brought his man down each time with a lusty tackle.

This incapacity of their flyer to score upset, it seems, the Chesworthy centre three-quarters, who tried to do a little too much themselves; persisting in attempting the cutting-through business, when they were smothered before they could get rid of the ball, in the charitable but horribly bear-like hug of the Reverend Robert, who had dropped back.

A few minutes before half-time, however, the visitors put on a couple of tries. For the first a stocky half burrowed his way through; the second was dribbled over by Budge Rossiter. Neither was converted, but Chesworthy were leading by 11 to 3.

Sucking his welcome lemon at the interval, the Reverend Robert felt slightly disappointed. Something had put the idea into his head—he couldn't say what—that his Flotsam Gentleman was a player of real class. Now, he reflected ruefully, the idea was exploded; for though the boy had been given no opportunities, he had neither shown himself adept at making any.

The Reverend Robert sighed, and eyed his stalwarts. They looked, his keen eye told him, a beaten team. He was not yet, seemingly, to kindle the enthusiasm for which he had prayed.

Budge Rossiter's thoughts were also busy just then. They were estimating the amount of force required to flatten Juggie out without detection. And Juggie himself? Ah, the Flotsam Gentleman was longing secretly for half a dozen men from Lowbrough. With Blake and Nicholson at half in front of him, and Butland at his side here in the centre—but there the whistle went.

"Rub it in!" screamed Farmer Rossiter, as boot and leather his favourites got to work, with Budge in the van of the scarlet jerseys that thundered in a body towards Juggie's wing. He threw himself upon the ball; their torrent broke over him, exactly as waves break over a rock; but as it surged onwards somebody shouted, and the referee blew shrilly on his whistle. "Man hurt!" ran the tidings.

The blood was pulsing under Budge's bronze as he watched them stoop over Juggie, and a moment or two afterwards lift him and carry him very tenderly into touch. His eyes were closed, and his head sagged limply backwards.

"Water!" the referee was calling. "As nasty a kick on the head as ever I saw."

"But nobody to blame," Budge answered, sourly.

In a minute or two the water revived Juggie, but the Reverend Robert bade them keep him quiet. "He's got concussion," he told his staring men. "Well, Mr. Referee, we'd better go on."

"I was just going to command it," said the referee.

So bequeathing their injured to the care of Micah Hicks, who was chemist and many other things at Staunton, they resumed the game in a more lifeless fashion, and Chesworthy had converted another try, when a shout hailed Juggie's reappearance. His step was brisk enough as he advanced, but his eyes looked vacant and a little baffled, and the tones in which he asserted his perfect recovery were harder and scarcely like his own.

"You're sure?" the Reverend Robert asked, anxiously. "You're certain?"

"Quite, sir," Juggie smiled.

With a lead of sixteen points to three, Chesworthy felt no more need to bustle. But five minutes after Juggie's reappearance somebody tossed the ball blindly in his direction, and leaping, and taking it above his head, he got into his stride immediately, and rounded

his *vis-à-vis* with a swerving run. Another swerve, and he had beaten the full-back; and was planting the ball quite plumb between the goal-posts. The blacksmith put it safely over the bar before the visitors had ceased to gape amazement.

"Come, that's better!" cried Mr. Vanstone. "Up, Staunton!" And "Up, Staunton!" echoed the village crowd.

As their cry reached Juggie's ears he looked round vaguely. Up, Staunton? It was "Up, Lowbrough!" they meant. "Up, Lowbrough!" he muttered. "Now, the school!"

"Juggie," he said to himself a minute afterwards, "you're out to win your Fifteen Cap to-day."

If ever a side rallied, Staunton did. The brilliant flash of play by their convalescent had put new life into their rugged hearts. Like tigers they surged to the attack, and whenever they could they threw the ball to Juggie.

They were to witness now the master touch responding to the call on it. Whatever Juggie did, he did no wrong. All his old talent, his finesse and judgment, seemed developed to a degree well-nigh uncanny. He nursed his forwards cunningly with raking kicks that found touch every time unerringly. He made his mark with hordes of scarlet on him; and when he did have a few yards to move away in, it was astonishing how he got his pace up at once.

But Chesworthy never gave him room to go very far, and the next score came when, with the visitors attacking, their left wing fumbled a poor pass. The ball dropped at his toes, and, as he dropped to retrieve it, a green streak flashed, and dribbled it from his fingers.

He grabbed; the green streak did not stop to gather, and then he sped after in full cry. But the streak which had now resolved itself into Juggie was dribbling ahead with a start of ten clear yards.

Across shot the full back, but Juggie dribbled past him; then kicked hard—and *so* they raced for it. The race could end only in one way. It went to the man who started facing the goal.

In this dramatic fashion did Juggie score Staunton's third try, by a brilliant *coup* that had transformed defence into attack.

"School, school!" he was muttering under his breath while the blacksmith landed it over the bar again.

The Reverend Robert had no longer grounds to complain, for the moment, at any rate, of his parishioners' lethargy. The crowd screamed and shouted itself hoarse; it begged, it implored its champions for "One more!"

One more? But only a few minutes to go.

For these few minutes, as he admitted afterwards, the Reverend Robert felt like three forwards and a couple of backs. His feats were not unworthy of the sensation; everywhere his big bulk towered and fought. But it was Juggie in the final desperate rush who put the seal upon Staunton's reputation and gave it thereafter a name in Cornish football. And he did it this way:—

The locals were in their enemy's twenty-five, and the Reverend Robert had picked up and flung to Juggie. Be sure that he was desperately marked now, and when a quick glance told him he was cornered, he swerved outwards, swerved in again, and dropped at goal as Budge Rossiter tackled him. The ball rose very straight—and over the bar.

Then Juggie cried out, "School!" at the top of his voice, and dropped in a huddled heap upon the touch-line.

"You know," the Reverend Robert was saying next evening, when, having slept for twenty-six hours on stretch, Juggie came down none the worse to the Sunday supper, "you know you were suffering from concussion all the time. I thought you were better. But you weren't. And when you returned to the field, after your knock-out, you imagined you were playing for your school."

"Did I?" said Juggie, shyly. "I remember nothing, sir, of that second half."

"You don't remember coming on again?"

"The last thing I remember was a boot on the head."

So the Reverend Robert told him how he had acquitted himself, and won the victory upon call of time. "Of course," he said, decisively, "it's not unique. There have been other instances like yours; more than one of a man being laid out and returning to the game and playing without knowing it——"

"There have, sir?"

"Oh, yes, several. But in your case the effect was curious. Being subconscious you lost your nervousness. You were an automaton, your talent at its very best. Now what do you think of that, psychologically?"

"I've never done any psychology, sir," smiled Juggie. "But, practically, it meant a whacking for Chesworthy."

"By seventeen points to sixteen," said the other. "And it means more than that, I

think," he went on, gravely. "It has meant my people enthusiastic at last. My word! They want me already to run two teams."

Juggie smiled again, expansively.

"And now, Mr. Flotsam, I'll tell you something else. When we brought you back, delirious, from the ground, you kept crying out, 'School, school! Now, Lowbrough!' Old man, I think you've given yourself away."

"Yes, I was at Lowbrough," Juggie said.

"You'd like to tell me your story?"

And Juggie told it.

The Reverend Robert stretched his aching limbs, grimacing with the twinges of pain it caused. "Yes, I *am* stiff," he admitted, "horribly. They'll never persuade *me* to turn out again. You see, it's fifteen years since I skippered Lowbrough—hold on—one minute. I believe I'm on the right side of the Man still. Anyhow, I'm off to-morrow to see. I've settled Rossiter."

"I say!" was all that Juggie could manage to answer.

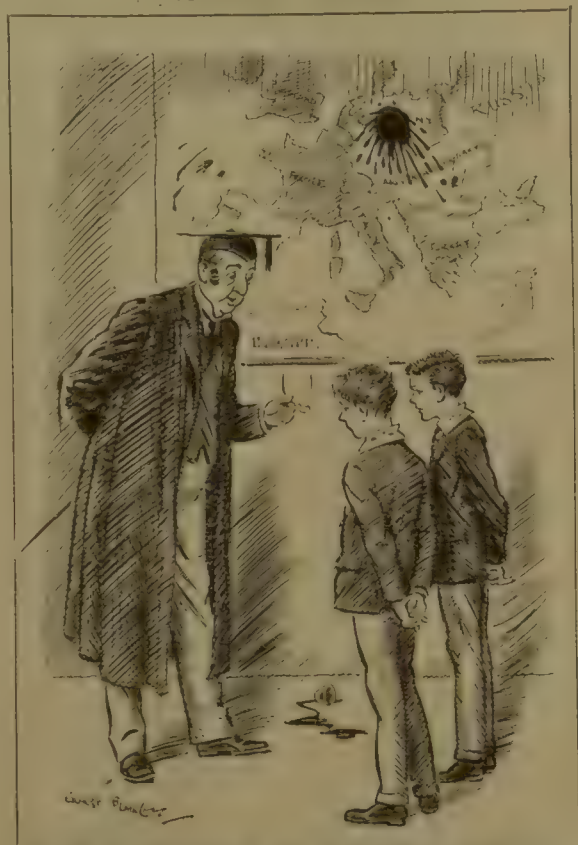
And the Reverend Robert proved as good a diplomat as he had proved a slogging leader of forwards. For the records show that Juggie Barkworth returned to the old school, and won a Rugger cap he had despaired of. It is said that when the Man of Lowbrough heard the story he cabled to a lonely station in India, and got the answer which he had suggested:—

"Yes. Awfully grateful if you'll keep him till next spring. He will love to be back."

"He will love to be back."

Perhaps, after all, the major was not such a stranger to sentiment as he desired to seem. Perhaps he understood Juggie as much as Juggie misunderstood him. Perhaps all fathers veil something of their feelings from their sons. But there comes a day when the mask is lifted, and all is well.

EUROPEAN CHANGES



[Parkins and Biggleswade have had a furious battle, in the course of which inkpots have been used as ammunition.]

THE HEAD: "I may say that had the damage you have done been of—ahem!—a rather different nature I should have been obliged to administer corporal punishment. In the—er—circumstances, however, we will say no more about it."

"THE CAPTAIN" WAR PORTFOLIO

Some of the Most Stirring Episodes of the War, depicted by Frank H. Mason, R.B.A., Lionel Edwards, T. Friedenson, T. M. R. Whitwell, John de Walton, and George Soper.

HEROIC FRENCH SCOUTS

Sent out to ascertain the position of the German trenches, a French sergeant and three men located the enemy, and then, climbing on to the tiled roof of a farmhouse, opened fire. The Germans replied with shells, and the brave party were all killed save the sergeant, who managed to make his way back to safety.

The struggle in the Aisne valley was at times fought in terrific rain-storms, and many of the trenches
dauntless energy, and repelled

were nearly knee-deep in water. In spite of these wretched conditions the British troops fought with many a fierce German onslaught.

FRENCH SOLDIERS SAVED BY A BRITISH CYCLIST

A French infantry regiment was seen by a small British force to be advancing towards a wood where many Germans were ambushed. A cyclist was sent to warn the French, but was shot as he passed the wood, and a second cyclist who volunteered met with the same fate. Undeterred, a third dashed out on his machine, won through, and warned the French. The officer in command thereupon took the coveted "Medaille Militaire" from his own coat, and pinned it to the gallant cyclist's breast

RUSSIAN ARTILLERYMEN DASH TO DEATH TO AVOID CAPTURE

During the fierce fighting in East Prussia, a Russian battery was surprised on three sides by Germans, and its retreat cut off. The only way open to it led to a steep cliff, at the foot of which was a deep lake. Rather than surrender, the officer ordered his men to dash with the guns into the lake, and the order was at once carried out, many of the heroic soldiers meeting with death.

The German cavalry in retreat has found the British cavalry relentless in pursuit, for the soldiers who are held in such contempt by the Kaiser have not let their enemies gallop to safety unhampered. The same individual superiority over the Germans has been won by British horsemen as by their comrades in the trenches.

A MOTOR-CYCLIST'S ESCAPE

A motor-cyclist had a thrilling experience when, carrying important messages, he was suddenly pursued by a patrol of German cavalry ambushed in a wood by the side of the road. One of the enemy almost succeeded in getting a lance-thrust home, but the pace of his machine at last carried the Englishman out of danger.

A GALLANT COLDSTREAMER

Private Dobson of the Coldstreams volunteered to go out in face of a hot German fire to rescue a wounded comrade. He reached his man and, with the timely aid at a critical moment of Corporal Brown, brought him back to thee trenches. For this act of heroism he was recommended for the Victoria Cross.

While the Allied Armies were resisting the desperate German attempts to gain possession of the coast, gunnery bombarded the enemy's trenches, compelling the Germans to evacuate them, and destroying many German submarines which constantly

valuable help was rendered by the Navy, particularly by three British monitors, which with excellent of their guns. These three gunboats are of shallow draught, and were thus less open to attack from the menaced the rest of the Fleet in the vicinity.

A BRITISH RAID ON ZEPPELIN SHEDS

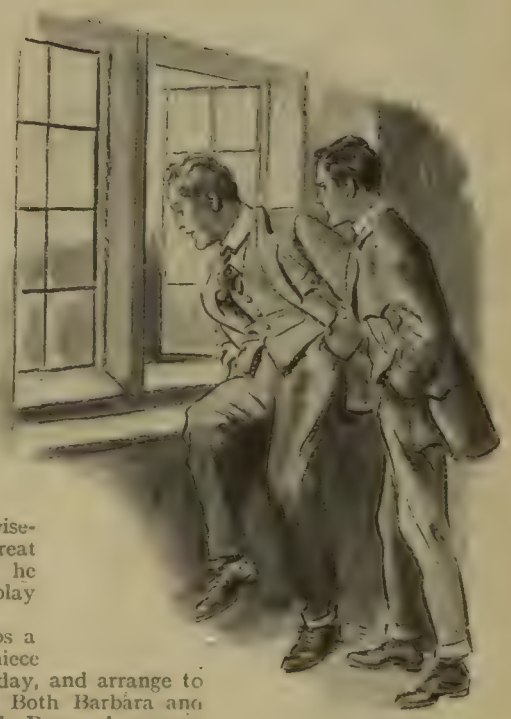
The daring raid of British aeroplanes on the Zeppelin sheds at Dusseldorf was one of the most brilliant exploits of the war. Though one of the machines was hit by a projectile after three bombs had been successfully dropped from it, all the raiders returned to their base in safety.

WHO CARES?

A Public School Story

By HYLTON CLEAVER

Illustrated by H. M. Brock, R.I.



SYNOPSIS OF PREVIOUS INSTALMENTS

James Roscoe enters Harley School, and is assigned to Godwin's house. He is a surly youth, ill mannered, and entirely devoid of public spirit. Early in the term he is incited by Menzies, a senior, to steal chocolate from the village sweet-shop, and for this he receives a thrashing from Laing, the school captain.

Laing has just been transferred by the head master to Godwin's house, hitherto the most badly managed in the school. Mr. Godwin objects to prefects in his house using the cane, and is angered to find that Laing intends to avail himself of the school rule which permits him to do so. Laing is of small stature, with wise-looking features, and throughout the school has a great reputation for sagacity. Though not an athlete himself, he determines that Godwin's shall in future make a better display in the house games than hitherto.

While walking near Harley village one day, Roscoe stops a fight between two dogs belonging to a Mrs. North and her niece Barbara, who invite Roscoe to tea on the following Saturday, and arrange to meet him at the school football match in the afternoon. Both Barbara and her aunt take a keen interest in Harley School games, while Roscoe has never yet attended a match.

CHAPTER XVII

LINKING UP

On the following Saturday, Roscoe, for the first time since he had been at the school, watched the Harley Fifteen play Rugger. Before the game he met Barbara and Mrs. North, who inquired solicitously after his hand. This, still bound up, had been a source of curiosity to many a Harleyan during the last few days. Roscoe's explanation that he had "cut it" and had seen Dr. Sharp had, however, satisfied most of them, and on being refused permission to "see the place," they had wandered away off-handedly. Now, however, he found himself able to bask in the sunshine of real, genuine sympathy. This was something entirely new to him, and he found Barbara's anxious glances in the direction of his bandages not altogether unwelcome. Satisfied, however, that he had not yet contracted hydrophobia, the two visitors moved on with Roscoe towards the touch-line, James being the object of many searching glances on the way.

"Whereabouts do you usually go?" asked Barbara.

"Oh," said James, "anywhere."

"Just about here?"

"Yes, that'll do."

"Now," continued Barbara, "I want you to tell me all about one or two of the boys playing. I don't know them *all* this year."

"Yes," said Roscoe, glumly. He then stood with both hands in his pockets, and leaned feebly against a post.

"You won this match last year, didn't you?" asked Barbara.

"I wasn't here then."

"Well—I suppose you *know*," said she, looking at him quaintly. "I think you did. They're Kellingham, aren't they? It's one of the big matches, of course. Hullo—here they come! There's Weldon. I like him. And I know that tall boy—Rick. Who's the dark-haired one beside him?"

"I'm not sure of his name," said Roscoe.

"Not sure? But—but don't you know them *all?* I should have thought——"

Roscoe was staring vacantly in front of him, and Barbara, looking up at him in surprise, allowed her sentence to trail off into vague murmurings of bewilderment. She said no more until the game started.

Flabby must be the heart, poor-spirited the

soul of the man who can watch unmoved a real game of "Rugger as It Should Be," Rugger as you find it played on a slightly muddy day, between two rival schools; when the game forward is one long *mêlée* of panting, dishevelled humanity, when backs are dashing away with the ball, hoping to make play open, when two long lines of partisan onlookers are bellowing to their chosen from the touch-lines.

Roscoe, watching such a game, as has been said, for the first time, felt a vague fluttering in the neighbourhood of his heart, and wondered why. He stood holding on to the rope that kept the crowd from the touch-line, and watched closely without shouting. Now and again play came almost under his very nose. At such times he always noticed Weldon—no longer the blithe young man of everyday life, but now something akin to a full-blooded broncho—heaving and wriggling in the front of the scrum, or fighting tooth and nail in the loose, and always shouting encouragement to the bevy of mud-streaked Harley bloods around him who were earning now the privilege of strolling round the school during the week, hands in pockets, "colour" ties signalling their right to hero-worship.

Now and again the ball came right out to the backs. Then Roscoe would see the three-quarter line start forward mechanically, whilst the opposing backs dashed up to tackle their men. The ball was swung from one pair of hands to another. Sometimes a man cut through on his own, and a crash of cheering told Roscoe that he had "done something." More often the ball went steadily out to the wing, the crowd at the ropes tense with excitement until the last man had gathered the ball at top speed and was away, when again that great roar broke out to speed him on, until perhaps an opponent came up to fling himself at his knees, and bring him down hurtling into the mud. When it was all over Barbara turned to Roscoe enthusiastically.

"Oh, I *wish* I were a boy," said she. "Isn't it a *grand* game?"

"Yes," said Roscoe. "Am I to come with you now?"

Barbara looked at him a little regretfully. She would have liked him to have slapped his thigh and turned to her, eyes flashing fire, with a "Rugger! There's nothing like it anywhere in the world. It's the greatest thing in life."

Instead he seemed but vaguely interested; the venue of his tea was apparently the thought uppermost in his mind. It was difficult at the time, to remember how he had flung himself at two fighting dogs for all the world as if he were plunging into a tussle on a goal-line. He puzzled her.

That night the dog Samuel died of a broken heart. Since the day when he had met Pip in that great battle wherein all his long-pent-up hopes had found vent he had been slowly pining away. That fight had meant so much to him. It was bad enough to have a rival in the house at all. To meet that rival at last in a real, slashing, stand-up scrap had been his great chance—and he had failed to thrash Pip. When the vet. had noticed the first symptoms of Samuel's decline, he had turned to Mrs. North.

"It is not at all unknown," he had said, "for a dog to die of a broken heart, and that is what this fine old fellow's going to do. His pride's hurt. He's got no more interest in life. He doesn't want to go on living with the knowledge that there's another dog in the house chuckling because he couldn't thrash him." He stooped and patted Samuel's head sympathetically. "I know just how he feels. It's a dog's point of view. He could easily get over his wounds. He just doesn't want to. He's going to lie down and die."

He was right. Great-hearted Samuel, crushed in spirit, threw up his chance in life and left Pip supreme. To Samuel it was complete victory or nothing. There was none of the win, lose, or draw about him. He fought for honour, and since he had failed to get home he died.

Mrs. North and Barbara were very desolate that evening, and when Roscoe left to return to school he, too, was a little moved. There was something rather fine in this sort of *hari-kari* of Samuel's, and Roscoe went home wondering how best he could show his sympathy.

CHAPTER XVIII

CLEARING DECKS

ONE day during the following week, Weldon betook himself to Laing's study.

"What cheer!" said he. "Did your people win to-day?"

"In a friendly match to-day with Mr. Hedge's House," said Laing, thoughtfully, "Mr. Godwin's boys did not win. They were two short."

Weldon shook his head gravely.

"That's bad," said he. "Too short, you say? Why don't you make 'em all put some

fertiliser in their boots? P'raps they'll grow a bit."

"You miss the point. We were two men short of the requisite number for a Rugger side. Menzies and Symington failed to roll up."

"Pest!" said Weldon sympathetically, beating the air with his hand.

"I suppose," said Laing, "that from the onlooker's point of view it's rather a funny business, this Godwin farce. In the same way people are always making jokes about dentists that they never see once they're inside the waiting-room. P'raps I'm a bit too keen on the school, or something. Anyway, I don't quite see the humour in leaving a house exactly as I found it. I go up to Cambridge after the summer term. It doesn't leave much time to get this house in front of the others, does it?—especially when the work in doing it is just like a treadmill. The good I do, Menzies and Co. counteract. Things are just as they were when I first came. I'm getting annoyed. I am about to start getting busy."

"Shoot them down," said Weldon, "like dogs."

Laing flushed slightly.

"Go on being funny," said he. "We don't get much of it here in Godwin's."

"Sorry," said Weldon. "Don't mind me. It's only my little joke."

"Very little. So little that I'm blowed if I can see it at all. Hiding somewhere, I'll be bound, the little rascal."

"I take a friendly interest in you," said Weldon—"and you snub me for my pains."

"Have *you* got pains, too?" asked Laing. "So have I."

"Laing," said Weldon, "I give in. What is the matter?"

"The matter is this. Menzies and Symington didn't turn up for the game to-day, and it's absolutely clear that if anything is to be made of this house the two men who will have to go are——"

"Menzies and Symington?"

"Menzies," said Laing, "and Godwin."

"We will sit down," said Weldon, "and thrash this matter out to the very bottom. Tell me the life-history of these two miscreants."

"Unless you stop rotting, Weldon," said Laing, "what I *shall* do is to sling you out of this study. Please shut up!"

"I am shut tight," said Weldon. "Proceed."

"What," said Laing, "do you suggest that I do?"

"If you want to get rid of Menzies, I should ask Godwin to have him transferred."

"What for?"

"Being useless."

"You can't transfer a man because he's useless. How about the house you sling him into? They'd be pleased, wouldn't they?"

"Then what," said Weldon, "do *you* suggest?"

"I intend to give him all the rope he wants. Even if he doesn't hang himself, he's pretty certain to get tangled up in it."

"And what then?"

"Then," said Laing, "he will leave the school suddenly and without any cordial handshakings."

"Oh—and what about Symington?"

"Symington may as well be saved from the wreck. The way to do it is to give him better pals than Menzies and Co. At present he's a little crushed. It's probably never occurred to him that he could come in with us, so to speak. I'm sure he's pretty fed up with Menzies. All we've got to do is to take him away from his evil cronies and make a man of him."

"Puzzle," said Weldon. "How is it done? Well, take between the thumb and index finger of the right hand an ordinary penny——"

"It is done, firstly, by breaking up that study and letting Menzies have one to himself; secondly, by giving Symington a study pal with some pretensions to soundness."

"Name of proposed pal?" asked Weldon.

"Laing."

"Great Scott—you're going to have him in with you?"

"You have guessed the answer."

Weldon rose and strolled up and down the study for a while, chin buried in his tie.

"Of course," he said, presently. "It's like you—unselfish and all that. You can't possibly *want* Symington. No sane man with a study of his own would want to lug Symington into it. Are you sure it's necessary?"

"Quite. It means a lot of rope to Menzies."

"Surely," said Weldon, "it'd be better if you had *him* in with you. You could knock him into shape a bit."

"Unfortunately," said Laing, "I am physically incapable of knocking Menzies either into or out of shape. Also, I don't want to whack him or report him to Godwin. No; I think it'll be better to rescue Symington, and leave Menzies to his doom. I only hope his doom will buck up and take him whole-heartedly. I thought of starting now. If I send for Symington you could be here, and make yourself affable. He'd be frightfully bucked. I don't think that once he's sure you and I and one

or two senior men are ready to extend the pally hand to him and make him comfy, he'd be long in coming round. He'll be quite easy to reform, away from Menzies."

"All right," said Weldon. "I'll lend my charms to the cure."

Laing went to the door, and bellowed down the corridor for his fag, or deputy.

In Study No. 12 Menzies and Symington were confronting each other across the table.

"I suppose," the latter was saying, "there'll be no end of a row about this afternoon."

"Why? We're prefects. We're not bound to play footer. We can play fives or something. How's Laing to know what we did?"

"He probably tried to find us. He generally noses out these things."

"Bah! You're afraid of him."

"No, I'm not," said Symington.

"Of course you are."

"I'm not."

"Then—if he calls you up, just you tell him to mind his own business. He's too bossy. You tell him so. I shall."

"I will," said Symington.

"And if he's tumbled to anything, don't you be browbeaten. Tell him what you think of him. I shall."

"Yes," said Symington.

Then a knock came at the door, and a small boy followed it.

"Please, Symington," said he, "Laing wants you."

Symington rose, and smoothed his hair.

"Ah," said Menzies, "now we'll see who's afraid."

Symington, rubbing his finger-nails against his coat sleeve, laughed jauntily and went out into the corridor.

The meeting was a little dramatic.

He opened Laing's door and strolled in, then saw Weldon and stopped.

It suddenly flashed across his mind that there was going to be a row. He had jibbed football. The captain of football and the captain of his house had sent for him. He felt the lack of Menzies' goading taunts, tried to remember how they had inspired him at the time, felt ignominious and foolish.

"Hallo, Symington," said Laing; "come in."

"Hallo!" said Weldon. "How's things?"

Symington came in, treading suspiciously—like a man who expects traps all over the floor.

"Weldon and I," said Laing, "often have little pow-wows together here. We didn't see why you shouldn't join us. It might help us in pulling together to run this house well. We're just going to brew some coffee. D'you like it?"

Symington smiled nervously. "Yes," said he, "thanks." He stopped for an hour. They would not let him go. Each time he rose Laing and Weldon thrust him back into his chair, and opened up some new discussion. Never once did they mention Symington's failure to turn up at footer that day. They left that to his guilty conscience, which did the job well. He had never been more surprised in his life. (In the one match that remained to be played off that year, however, it was noticeable that the team selected to do duty for Godwin's included neither Symington nor Menzies.) Without comment they were just dropped. At last Symington was allowed to leave Laing's social circle. He went slowly back to Menzies, and for the first time felt really and truly contemptuous of his study mate. He felt strong.

"Well," said Menzies, "you've been long enough. Been stopping to grub?"

"Yes," said Symington.

"What?"

"Yes."

"What do you mean—yes?"

"No," said Symington.

"Have you gone mad?"

"Menzies," said Symington, bravely, "you are an ass." And he went out of the study again.

Menzies did not quite realise why he was an ass until the following morning when Laing stopped him.

"Oh, Menzies," said he, "we're going to make a few changes in studies. You're going to have one to yourself. Morrison and Cox will have yours. Symington's going to share mine with me."

"What on earth for?" asked Menzies.

"I don't know that it matters what on earth for. That's what's going to happen."

"Oh," said Menzies. "Well—I mean it's rather curious."

"Yes," said Laing, "I've got curious men to deal with. Have a good game of fives yesterday?"

"I didn't play fives."

"No? Well, dominoes, p'raps? Some of our chaps played footer. They had a sort of match on, you know. A house game, in fact—I dare say you're quite good at dominoes. You don't have to train for that, of course? Well—move your things into No. 4 to-day, won't you? I've seen Godwin about it. Good-bye."

And Menzies was left standing stupidly by himself, mouthing.

CHAPTER XIX

MENZIES CLIMBS DOWN

"HAVE you," said Morrison, "seen Cox rotting about here, Roscoe?"

Roscoe, ambling down a corridor in Godwin's that evening, shook his head.

"No?" said Morrison. "You have not seen Cox. Well, well, *somebody* must have him." He stood still, lifted up his head like a dog about to howl, and cried the name of Cox mournfully down the corridor three times.

At the third cry the door of No. 12 study opened, and Menzies came out and looked round irritably until he espied Morrison about to howl once again, then "What, the dickens are you making that filthy row for?" he said. "What do you want?"

"Cox," said Morrison. "Have you Cox?"

"Don't be a fool. What d'you want Cox for?"

"I want him," said Morrison, "to assist in moving our belongings into your study. You see the joke. Yes?"

"Oh," said Menzies; "well you can jolly well wait till I'm ready. I'm not going to rush about the house with an armful of furniture just because you want Cox to move in."

"But the hour," said Morrison, "is 8 p.m. Our instructions are to transfer to-night. Time presses. We shall require you, Menzies, to—er—bung off."

Menzies gazed at him stolidly, then passed into his study again and shut the door, as Cox came down the passage.

"Ah," said Morrison, cheerfully, "Menzies wants you, Cox. He's ready to move."

"Is he?" said Cox. He opened the study door. "Hullo, Menzies!" said he. "Ready?"

Menzies rose from his table, seized a lexicon, threw it hard at Cox's neck.

"Get out," said he.

Cox retired.

"What's the joke, Morrison?" said he, as he came out. "Why isn't he ready?"

"I do not know why he is not ready, Cox," said Morrison; "but I do know that we are going to start moving in at once. We're taking no lip from Menzies. Come and fetch a few things."

Before Menzies could interfere, Cox swept the ornaments off the mantelpiece, and sent them crashing into the fireplace.

Cox grinned, and the two started off.

In a few minutes they returned, Morrison carrying a rough bookcase and a bag, and Cox a small table and an armful of footer clothes. Morrison opened the study door without knocking, and stamped in.

"Come on, Menzies," he said, "we're taking possession—don't want to wait outside all the evening like bailiffs till you choose to ask us in."

Menzies flushed angrily and got to his feet. Symington had already light-heartedly moved his things into Laing's big study. The place

now had a certain air of discomfort. There was no object in his remaining. Yet he objected to the idea that he was in any way compelled to go. As a matter of fact, Laing was anxious to get things thoroughly shipshape for his final effort at house-making, before the school broke up, so that he might commence the summer term, as it were, with a flying start. Menzies had no means of following his reasoning, and anyhow he objected. It was part of his principle to "object" to everything introduced by Laing.

"What impudent cheek!" he said. "Take your muck away."

"You'll have to get out, Menzies," said Morrison; "don't be a clown."

"Take your muck away," said Menzies again.

For answer Morrison put his bag in a corner, and commenced to take out a few ornaments and photographs which he lay on the table. Cox boldly commenced to strip the walls of Menzies' groups.

Their owner stepped forward hurriedly and seized Cox's arm.

"You jolly well put those back," said he.

Cox shook himself free.

"Why don't you sit down and cry?" said he.

Menzies then stepped back and hit him on the back of the head with his open hand.

"You'll be the first to blub, I expect," he said. "Take that to go on with."

Cox swung round, forgot that Menzies was ethically a monitor, and hit him on the chin. Morrison stepped between them.

"Don't ass about," he said. "Get along out of it, Menzies. It's no good making a fool of yourself. Why lose your wool because you're changing studies?"

"You mind your own business," said Menzies, gripping Cox by the shoulders. "I'm going to chuck you both out."

Cox struggled free, flushing angrily; then, before Menzies could guess his intent, he had turned to the remaining ornaments on the mantelpiece and swept them off with his hand, sending them crashing into the grate.

"Unless you want your pictures smashed, too," said he, tensely, "take 'em down as quick as you can. You're like some idiotic kid."

Menzies stood sulkily beside his table. He hesitated to attack Cox again, for he had already discovered that he could hit harder than was pleasant, and he also noticed that Morrison was becoming very impatient.

"You'll pay for this," he said, weakly—a lot of his bluster dwindling away. "I'll have you both thrashed by the prefects."

"Will you get out?" said Morrison. "We've had about enough of you in Godwin's. You've had your own way too long. Laing's right. You want to be isolated. Buck up and isolate yourself."

"I'll go when I like," said Menzies.

"You'll go now," said Morrison.

There was a pause. Menzies still stood awkwardly beside his table, and all his bravado gradually leaked away and left him a mere jelly fish. He still waited for a little while, however, in the hopes of the other men giving in. Then since they merely stood and looked at him aggressively, he turned to the wall and slowly started to take his books from a shelf. Morrison indicated his bag and the table.

"We'll leave these here," said he, shortly, "and go back for more."

Cox nodded and followed him out.

As soon as they had gone, Menzies went into the corridor and shouted for his fag. There was no answer. Roscoe, who throughout had been leaning against a window in the passage reading a pink-coloured paper, was the only junior in sight.

"Hi!" said Menzies. "Come here and clear out my stuff, Roscoe, will you?"

James looked up and hesitated. Then he folded up his paper, looked half-heartedly up and down the passage, and started off hurriedly in the opposite direction.

"No," he said, shortly; "I heard Morrison tell you to."

He had gained courage from this sudden revolt against Menzies. He felt that people would side with him against this unpopular monitor. Menzies ran after him, angrily.

"Come here!" he shouted. "Come here, you little beast!"

Roscoe ran faster—faster, in the end, than Menzies, and more cunningly.

When, at last, the latter returned fuming to his study, he found Morrison and Cox standing stubbornly outside.

"Why on earth," said Cox, "haven't you shifted your things?"

Menzies gulped, and started to explain. Then he noticed Laing approaching down the passage, and he went into his study and started to dismantle in earnest. At heart Menzies was unhappy.

CHAPTER XX

THE GREAT IDEA

THE Great Idea came to Roscoe suddenly, during the week, after he had taken tea with Barbara, striking well home and refusing to be dislodged.

For the first time within his memory, James had felt a desire to please somebody. Barbara had appealed to him from an entirely novel point of view, which was, of course, in reality, largely due to the fact that he had first come under her notice in the light of a budding hero, in which light nobody else had ever seen him. True he was puzzling her, but she could not believe that he was really so far removed from her ideal of a boy as he sometimes seemed, and with a generous mind she strove to draw out the good points that she felt sure he must possess. Other folk had almost invariably made his acquaintance in a manner not calculated to leave a good impression, and they, therefore, delved for no charms, and consequently found none. Coming as an unusual experience, Barbara's attitude was having its effect upon him. He felt almost sorry that he had so frequently to admit his apathy where sport was concerned, and it hurt him a little to notice Barbara's invariably pained surprise; consequently, now that the death of Samuel had saddened her, he was conscious of a vague wish to ingratiate himself by some example of thoughtfulness, and, whilst thinking on this, the Great Idea had come.

A few miles out of Harley there was a dog's home, where, so Roscoe had heard, one might obtain a dog free, on promising a good home. The Idea was that James should journey out there on his next half-holiday, secure a dog, and take it to Barbara. Here, however, was where the true greatness of the Idea became noticeable. Roscoe was not prepared to do all this merely with a view to satisfying his conscience in respect of games. It seemed to him that it would be a far more clever scheme if he were to explain when offering the dog that he had been saving up to buy a pet for himself, but that at the demise of Samuel he had felt so keenly anxious to show practical sympathy that he had gone, cash in hand, to a dog-fancier and purchased the animal he now presented. He considered that this martyrdom would ensure the honeyed word from Barbara without stint, and at the time he was undoubtedly anxious to prove himself less despicable in his new chum's eyes than he felt himself likely to appear.

On the Thursday afternoon, therefore, Roscoe duly set out, taking with him the great Idea, frizzling hot. Undoubtedly Barbara had accomplished a very difficult feat. She had actually made Roscoe go out of his way to earn praise. The fact that his method was certainly underhand was really beside the point; the achievement remained, and was enough for the time being. Roscoe had been made to take a little interest in something outside himself. Certainly that was a milestone.

Barbara gained her first intimation that something of this sort was about to happen when, trimming the flowers in the front garden of "Westholme," she went to the gate to throw a handful of those that had passed in the night into the road. Looking casually down the hill she saw in the distance a boy who led by a string a dog. The boy's peculiar slouch at once told that this was James, and she remembered that it was Thursday, which brought him his weekly half-holiday; half the school took this on Wednesday and half on Thursday.

She waited at the gate until he came up. The dog was a fox-terrier, possessed of a certain quizzical look of inquiry, and a perky manner—a friendly little gentleman that won her heart.

Roscoe stood still, pulled at his cap with one hand, and with the other restrained the terrier, as far as possible, from pawing Barbara's white dress to pieces; then, for the moment, his manner became that of some tramp, who, led into a drawing-room, becomes suddenly conscious of his big hands and feet. He began to explain confusedly.

"I've brought you this dog, Barbara," said he. "I thought you'd miss Samuel, and p'raps you'd like this one instead. I——" he hurried on as he noticed that she was about to speak. "I—had been saving up to buy a dog myself, but I thought now, I'd rather give one to you." He handed her his end of the string, which she took from him with a smile.

As she murmured her gratitude, Roscoe stood by and listened with the sort of delight that old ladies manifest in gramophone records of Harry Lauder. His head a little on one side, he looked down at the dog prancing round Barbara's feet, and smiled reminiscently. "Ah, no," his expression seemed to say, "Ah, no. It is a mere nothing." Yet there was something a little wanting in Barbara's gratitude. She was polite without being effusive. There was no hysterical, hopeless searching after a fitting tribute to his goodness. He wondered why.

"Come in," said Barbara, "and see aunt. She's trimming her roses in the garden."

Roscoe followed her in; he looked forward to the hours to come, and saw that he would be well received. His kindliness would earn him a comfortable chair, many creamy cakes, and the admiring glances of Barbara.

Again he was disappointed. They passed through the house into the garden, when Barbara ran forward with her new pet, and explained things to Mrs. North, who in her turn was politely grateful to James. Barbara suggested a game of tennis. Roscoe "did not play." The afternoon wore on a little tediously—Barbara did not pick him a button-hole, and fasten it herself in his coat. He stopped to tea; conversation was polite, but he took little part in it. Shortly afterwards he went.

As he slouched slowly down Harley Hill he reviewed the events of the afternoon. He had set out that day with his Great Idea shining halo-like above him, feeling so sure of ingratiating himself that his narrow point of view had allowed for no slips. Looking back, he saw now that somewhere he had failed. Soft words of praise had not been showered upon him cooingly. Nobody had said, "Oh, it was awfully good of you; but you *shouldn't* have spent your money." He began to feel miserable, wished that he had never brought the dog, that the Great Idea had not stuck in his mind so obstinately; wished, finally, that he was not such a maggot.

Then, as he was thinking all this, he suddenly stopped short. He realised that he had deceived Barbara, the first person who had ever tried to understand him—had pretended that he had bought a dog which had really been a gift to him. The good that lay dormant somewhere in Roscoe shook itself together and upbraided him. He felt desperately sorry, so sorry that after a moment's further thought he turned and started back up the hill. When he came to "Westholme" again he hesitated outside for a moment, then marched determinedly up the drive and knocked boldly at the door. Barbara, espying him from a window, came out herself. Then, when he faced her in the porch, words suddenly failed him. He just stood and looked at her hopelessly, until his face became a dull brick red. Then he gulped—with a terrific effort he started on his apology.

"I've come to say I'm sorry," he said. "I told you I bought that dog. I really got it free from a dog's home."

Barbara put out her hand impetuously.

"Oh, I'm *so* glad," she said.

"Glad?"

"Yes—glad you came back to tell me. I was—afraid you wouldn't."

"Why—how—what do you mean?"

"Oh, you silly boy; we knew all the time. The little dog had one of those narrow blue collars on. All the dogs that come from the Lingley Home do. We—we got Pip there. So—you see, we knew."

If this story were a play it would be fit and proper that at this juncture, as these two stood and looked awkwardly at each other over the "Westholme" doormat, the sun should set rapidly. One of the two would then look up to remark that the light was failing. In the distance a man would be heard calling home his sheep, or his pig, or something. It would be a peaceful scene, artistically set.

Unfortunately, nothing of this sort took place. Roscoe held out his hand.

"Good-bye," he said, bluntly.

"Good-bye," said Barbara, taking it with a sorrowful smile. "We shall see you at the match on Saturday?"

He did not answer, but made away down the drive; as he passed out of the gate he heard the door shut softly behind him. He turned down the hill and hurried along in the dusk. His cheeks felt scalding hot; great salt rivers were trying to force their way out of his eyes, but he kept them back. He felt ignominious—a piece of wet string. Laing had tried to make a man of him, but his method had been the method of the public school, successful with youth in the bulk, but not always applicable to the exceptional boy. Laing had made him obedient, but he could never build up his character. That was another's job.

Now, for the first time, Roscoe was beaten into a mental pulp, and that other, whose job it was, had done this thing unintentionally—by the aid of luck or fate, maybe, but nevertheless wholly and effectually. And Roscoe knew it, which was the greatest point of all.

CHAPTER XXI

RUBBING IT IN

ROSCOE got back to school that evening longing for the peace and solitude of a small, dark room where he might sit for many hours relenting. The point of view of the dog Samuel came back to him. He understood what had caused him to lay down and die when he knew that he was, in a measure, disgraced. Unluckily, the first thing that

happened was that upon entering Godwin's he was hailed by a youth from over the banisters.

"Hi," said he, coming downstairs—his name was Pearce, by the way. "Laing'll want you in a minute. He's seeing us all."

"What d'you mean?" said Roscoe.

A man rarely said anything to Roscoe without being asked what he meant. It was an offensive habit of the Maggot's, but it gave him time to take in the point made and to prepare some suitable retort.

At that moment another boy, Halliday, came from the direction of Laing's study, smiling pleasantly.

"Hullo, Pearce!" said he, ignoring Roscoe's presence. "I've just seen Laing."

He spoke with some self-satisfaction, as who should say, "The Head has sent for me and submitted the proofs of a New Arithmetic for my consideration. I have not passed it."

"What's it all about?" said Pearce.

"About the house."

"What about it?"

"He wants us to buck up."

"But term's nearly over. What's all the excitement about?"

"I don't know exactly. Anyway, he's leaving at the end of the summer term, and he seems to be planning great things for the house to do. He wants us to win the cricket shield for one thing."

"Great Scott!" said Pearce, deeply impressed.

"He's seeing Marriott now. He'll want you presently. I don't suppose he'll send for the Maggot here. Wouldn't be much good—what?"

"Pearce!" said another boy, coming up. "Laing wants you."

"Ah," said Pearce. "Righto!"

Roscoe waited impatiently. He knew Laing too well to suppose that it would do him any good to run away and hide. He would be sought out and dragged forth by the scruff of the neck. At the moment he preferred to go through it quietly. He was in many ways completely changed that night.

At last the summons came. James went upstairs slowly, and knocked at Laing's door. Laing stood before the fireplace in his favourite attitude. Symington was sprawling in a deck chair by the table, with a house list in his hand.

"Hullo, Roscoe," said Laing, affably, "I wanted to see you about summer games. Next term will be my last here, and I want to leave the house in a better position than I found it. I'm trying to straighten things out before we break up, so that we can start right away as soon as we come back. We've got all our entries for the sports, but now I want every man to arrange to do something for the house next term. What will you do?"

Roscoe shuffled awkwardly and said nothing. In Laing's eyes he was just the same old Mongrel Maggot, unchanged, unaltered by his two terms at Harley.

Undoubtedly this boy was a miserable failure, unwanted in Laing's scheme of things. It was not Laing's fault. The change in Roscoe was deep down under the surface, and he could not possibly have noticed it. Still it was there.

"I'm afraid," said Laing, shortly, "you're hardly the sort of sportsman that'll help us much. You don't seem keen or even intelligent. Sometimes you don't even seem alive."

"No," said Symington, "when he was our fag we noticed it. He wants kicking."

"Will you play cricket?" said Laing

"No," said Roscoe, quietly. What was the good? He was disinterested, scarcely even knew the rules of the game. He would only be the laughing stock of the house.

"Well, will you take up rowing—will you swim?"

Again Roscoe shook his head.

Laing grew impatient. The house list was a lengthy enough affair to run through as it was, and Roscoe was not the sort of boy over whom he felt disposed to waste time.

"It's no good behaving like a village idiot," said he. "You've got to do something for the house. We're fed up with watching you roaming about like a rag-picker. It's abominably selfish, to say the least of it. Now, get it off your chest? What do you want to do for us next term?'

Still Roscoe stood woodenly before him, sullenly obstinate.

"Very well," said Laing. "Put him down to row, Symington. And," he added, turning to Roscoe, "take mighty good care you turn up. Go on, you can get out now. You make me sick."

"Yes," said Symington, "he makes me sick, too."

Roscoe, sick himself, went out.

After supper he met Cox, jubilant of mood, on the staircase.

"Why, Maggot," said he, "skim milk doesn't agree with *you* either. What are you laughing for?"

"I'm not laughing," said Roscoe.

"Good," said Cox; "well said; a good

answer. Now tell us what you *are* doing. That is to say, what are you doing for the house of Godwin next term?"

"Nothing," said James, making ready to pass on.

"You have made a good choice. Specialise, that's my tip. The all-round man's all right, but you want an expert or two at everything. You will devote your time to doing nothing. Right; good luck. You'll get your colours, I expect; there isn't much competition nowadays."

Roscoe went on to the common room, fetching his books from his locker on the way; he was a little early for prep., and a group of juniors were discussing something of importance in loud tones as he entered the room.

"And he said," one boy was remarking, "that the house depended on each one of us separately. Said we each had a distinct job, and that it was jolly important to do it well. I'm going to sweat up cricket in the hols. He made me feel rather keen. I'm glad I entered for the quarter-mile."

"Yes," said another; "I wouldn't mind fielding practice with Laing. He'll be captain of cricket next term. Only he'll probably be busy with the first, and make somebody else look after us. Symington, p'raps."

"Great Scott!"

"Symington's improving," said another boy. "Laing's doing him good. Hullo, there's the Maggot. Are you going to play cricket next term, Mangy?"

By this time Roscoe was feeling the effect of much salt rubbed into his raw wound. Everyone seemed to be choosing this evening, when for the first time he felt unpleasantly conscious of his failings, to point them out with a woeful lack of tact. He felt momentarily inclined to rush at the group of grinning juniors and give vent to his anger in blows rained wildly and without any definite object, breaking any heads that came within range. But, before he was roused sufficiently, that feeling of crushed despair came over him again and choked back his spirit.

"No," he said, "I'm not," and sank down miserably at a desk.

For a minute the others looked at him contemptuously, and some jeered. One actually went to the trouble of making a paper dart, which, with the point well dipped in red ink, he was about fling at James, when Mr. Godwin came into the room and secured for Roscoe a brief respite.

Next day the Maggot had occasion to call in at Mrs. Kent's, and here again he was reminded of his base ignominy. The old lady was still demanding her "hush money," and James only patronised her when actually sent by a senior. But the knowledge that she would always, to a great extent, have the whip-hand of him, hurt James quite a lot, and added to his flood tide of remorse.

She frequently told him that her business was not what it was. Her customers had been gradually stolen away by the new stores in the High Street, whose motto was "cheapness and credit." She depended upon Roscoe, so she declared, to advertise her claims widely in the school, otherwise she would be compelled, etc.

Coming out of the shop that day, however, he had the good fortune to meet Barbara, who was out with Pip and her new pet, Togo.

"Hullo!" said she. "I wanted to see you badly. Aunt's going to write you a note. We want you to come and stay with us in the holidays."

Roscoe's sleepy eyes bulged.

"*Really?*"

"Of course," said Barbara, with her capable, managing air, "you're to come for the whole time. It can easily be managed. If your uncle *should* make a fuss, auntie will write to him."

"Oh, *he* won't make a fuss," said Roscoe. "He'd be only too glad. But—it's a fine idea."

"Yes, isn't it? I want you to come because I shall have an old chum staying with me. He's just down from Oxford, and he'd help you with games and things."

Games—thought poor Roscoe. It was always games. Once again he felt a miserable pariah. He scowled a little.

"Don't you *want* to?" said Barbara.

"Oh, awfully," said he, smiling again. "It'd be fine. I'll write to my uncle to-night!"

"I dare say you'll see aunt on Saturday. She'll help you arrange things. I'll tell her."

"Thanks, awfully," said Roscoe. He pulled at his cap and turned away cheerfully.

Barbara smiled and passed on; realising diplomatically that with all Harley about he was not anxious to be seen with her. Harleyans might not understand.

So, as term drew to a close, were the various strings of summer sorted out and arranged by their respective pullers—and Laing and Barbara, all unknown to each other, worked nevertheless for the same end.

CHAPTER XXII

GODWIN'S TAKE PART IN THE SPORTS

TOWARDS the end of the term Laing became a busy man. Amidst all the work entailed by whipping up individual enthusiasm for the glories of next term he had also many duties in connection with the school sports which took place on the Saturday before the school broke up. He had already secured the entries of all the Godwinkles likely to be of service, but he had to appear on the track during the lunch hour and assist in timing races, judging heats, and so forth. Also, he never forgot his own men and the importance of making them feel that they were doing something great by running for their house. He himself was competing in the mile, Menzies and Marriott who had both been placed the previous year being the only other competitors from Godwin's. In this race there were no heats, for there were seldom more than about fifteen entrants, and visitors at the sports always liked to see a good field for the mile, which, in the general opinion, was the only race worth seeing unless you were keenly interested in house competition.

On the eve of the race Laing sent for Marriott.

"My friend," said he, when that young sportsman had duly appeared. "Godwin's have got to win something in these sports."

"Rather!" said Marriott.

"I think," Laing went on, reflectively, "that the mile would be a good race to win. It'd create a small stir for one thing, and it'd also set the noble example for this sparkling summer term that we're going to have."

"Yes. I expect you'll pull it off, Laing. Hope so."

"I? My good sir, *I've* got no earthly. I'm only going in for the thing to make the pace for you."

"Eh—*What?*" said Marriott, incredulously.

"Your business to-morrow will be to pull off the one mile race," said Laing. "Understand? I shall employ my somewhat quaint method of getting over the ground to the fullest extent possible in the effort to bring you along. Together, we shall run with judgment and great pace. See?"

"But," said Marriott, "that's rather rot, isn't it? I mean——" He stopped. This seemed to him an unheard-of suggestion. That the captain of the school, of cricket, and of Godwin's, that the little tin god of Harley, should of his own accord propose to make the pace for a mere junior in the mile was novel to the degree of being positively eccentric. The fact that the gentleman with this strangely original way of thinking was Laing explained much, but, to Marriott's mind, not all.

Why, if the man intended to be pacemaker at all, did he not suggest taking Menzies along?

"In what light," said Laing, mildly, "does the idea strike you as being rotten?"

"Well," said Marriott, "I mean—you're captain and all that. I should think *you* ought to win."

"Obliged. Compliment duly noted, etc., but we don't use *red* tape at the sports, you know. The best man is supposed to win, not the chap who's been in the school longest. You've obviously the best chance, so that it becomes my job to assist you to pull it off."

"There—there's Menzies," said Marriott, apologetically.

"Yes." Laing's hand went up to his chin as it generally did when he uttered some weighty dictum. "Only, as far as I'm concerned, Menzies, you see, is not running for Godwin's. He's running for himself. I'm afraid he'll wear our colours, but between you and me, Marriott, I think it'd be more of a calamity for Godwin's if Menzies won than if we didn't score a single point in the whole of the sports. I—er—I don't know whether you know Menzies at all well, but——"

"Yes, he'd be unbearable, I know."

"Not only unbearable in Godwin's," observed Laing, "but he'd shove his rotten win down the throats of men from all the other houses till the very name of Godwin's would make men ill. At present it merely doesn't interest them. A win by Menzies would give them that tired feeling."

"All right," said Marriott. "I'll go right out. But he's quite good, you know. I think he could beat me in the half."

"He's not fit. If I can run him off his legs in the early laps you ought to be able to get up at the finish."

"It's funny," said Marriott. "Running against our own man."

"Sounds strange, perhaps. Still, he's the chap I fear most. You want to look out for Rick, though. He's got the deuce of a stride, but I don't think he can get up enough pace to do any good. Then there's Sharp," he added, referring to a list in his hand, "who'll probably run round like a mad chicken for about two and a half laps and then fall head over heels in a dead faint. Hedges' have got Barnett and Christopherson, who are both in the quarter, the half, and the hurdles, and who

may not start, and certainly won't finish. Winter's running for Blake's—he might be dangerous, but not so dangerous as you. Munro's are sending Norson and Gore, who'll collide with each other every ten yards and stop to apologise, and who won't get farther than about a lap and a quarter. I think Weldon's running; but the mile's not his distance, and he's in about twenty other things as well. Who else is there?"

"Mayes. He's in Canaby's, isn't he?"

"Oh, yes. He's rather good. We shall want to get in front of him and keep there, and Rogers is in Canaby's, too. He was second in the half last year. I think all the others are pretty harmless. What else are you in?"

"I'm in the relay, and I was in the half, but if I'm to go all out in the mile, I shan't start in that."

"P'raps you'd better not. We don't want to run any risks. Well, remember what I've said: We'll make some sort of plans to-morrow. Get to bed early."

"Rather; thanks; good-bye."

"So-long," said Laing.

He did not mention the race to Marriott again until sports day, half an hour before the mile was timed to start. Then, seeking him out, he took his arm in a friendly grip, and led him towards the changing-room.

"I shall go off at a bit of a bat," said he. "I want people to think I mean to win. Don't follow me too fast. Let Menzies and people like Sharp and Weldon run themselves off their legs if they like. You keep about fourth or fifth. After the first lap I'll drop back a little and you can come up behind me, and I'll take you round. We'll try to keep about third and fourth. In the third lap I'll go on again, and try to dishearten the men in front. After that you'll have to gradually come up. I'll keep going as long as I can, but you'll probably pass me soon after the last lap starts, then you'll have to go on by yourself. I've arranged for a lot of our men to be down at the last bend, and they'll bring you along the straight in the usual way. You'll—er—be in front," he added, with a significant smile, "of course."

"Yes," said Marriott, grimly, "I'll be in front."

He felt a proud young man as he came out of the dressing-room with the Harley captain a little later, wrapped in a long overcoat, bare ankles and black running shoes showing up sportively as he walked on to the sports ground beside Laing. Rick met them by the judges' table.

"Hullo!" he said, jauntily. "going to a fancy dress ball?"

"Curiously enough," said Laing, "these are running men in their native costume. They tell us there's a mile race or something on. We thought of taking part. What's your event—the cup and ball race for relatives?"

"I am also in the mile. I shall be the man you'll notice loping along about three laps in front of you when the bell goes for the 'Pull up your socks.'"

"I'm sorry for you," said Laing. "*You're* in for it. I've been practising the barn dance a good deal lately—I expect you'll get out of the way after about the third kick."

"Cheers!" said Weldon, coming up at the moment, warm and by no means immaculate. "I'm having no end of a time. Since about two this afternoon I've done nothing but compete for cups. Keep on rushing round the track like a lunatic, and as soon as I finish one race I find it's time for the next, and I'm late, and have to dash up yelling blue thunder at the last minute. Then as soon as I finish *that* I tear round again, with a lot of other men. It's an amusing game. So far I haven't won anything at all. They tell me there's a consolation race, though—wouldn't mind running in it, only I'm afraid I shall get dizzy. D'you think they'd let me run round the other way for a change, and sort of unwind myself?"

"Are you in the mile, too?"

"Probably. I wouldn't run though, only I'm afraid the audience will miss my familiar figure, and create a riot. They'll think I've been done away with by Marriott or one of those bloods. Don't want to cause bloodshed on such a sunny day. So p'raps I'll start. I'll do a humorous turn; I think, this time. Keep on running inside you and tripping you up—get in the way generally, like a clown at a circus."

"You'd better shut up," said Laing. "I fancy you'll want all your wind. I propose to show to-day that the mile can easily be run by any man in seventeen and a half times his hundred-yard time."

"Yes," said Weldon, turning away. "Well, as you take about forty minutes to do a hundred yards, I should think you might bring off the experiment."

"Your remark," said Laing, "is without point."

"My remarks," retorted Weldon over his shoulder, "are always well rounded off. So-long. Don't breathe too heavily, or blow down my neck, will you?"

WHO CARES?

By HYLTON CLEAVER

"No, I never look over my shoulder when running," said Laing. "Hullo, we seem to be forming up!"

One mile race at school is, after all, very like another. In a handicap a number of men stand at intervals over on the far side of the track and look at each other appraisingly. Suddenly a pistol goes and they come back to earth and start. For the first lap they trot round like prancing circus horses; soon they appear to realise, however, that after all business is business, and they settle down to a pace that they hope will last; in the third lap some see the futility of the thing and retire, others lose their heads and rush to the front like fowls in front of an automobile. The remainder keep it up and fight out the finish between them.

It is doubtful, however, whether anybody has ever discovered any value in a mile handicap, for the only thing that the result proves is that the handicapper has made erroneous deductions. The sports committee at Harley, realising this, made their mile a level race. The start was naturally a little crowded. Also there was supposed to be a good deal in the luck of the draw for the inside position. In the end, however, the best man generally won, which is rarely the case in a handicap.

There were thirteen entries, and at the start it was difficult to distinguish one's favourites from the crowded side of the sports ground. When half a lap had been run, however, it was seen that Laing was taking the field along at a good pace, whilst Menzies and Sharp were second side by side. Marriott, who was known

Marriott came on in another effort to pass, but suddenly Menzies' elbow shot out and gave him a savage blow in the side.

to be a good stayer and a man of judgment, was, in accordance with instructions, lying about fifth. Menzies was running on a plan of his own. In reality this race meant a good deal to him. He realised as fully as anyone that he had an excellent chance, and that a win would be a great asset to him in the house. Others might not be pleased, but he would at least have a weapon with which to smite unsuccessful enthusiasts. *He* had won the mile for Godwin's. The Godwinkles should bow before him.

With this end in view he had trained for the event much more honestly than was his custom, and he was now determined to keep well in front, and repel all efforts to overtake him. At the end any men in front would either fall back or he would go after them and get the lead as they came down the straight. Meanwhile he was a little uncertain of Laing, who was keeping in front at a pace that could not last. At first he followed him, not wishing to be left too far behind. Then when he found the pace telling he dropped back a little, sure that the Harley captain would soon crack. Sharp, a man of pace but no "head" whatever, was keeping close behind Laing. Rick and Marriott were both somewhere behind Menzies. With the start of the second lap Laing slackened a little, and, as arranged, gradually dropped back for Marriott. As a result, Menzies came up with Sharp, and Rick went third. Marriott lengthened his stride a little, and coming up with Laing went round close behind him, the two very gradually overtaking the men in front. At the third lap Laing went ahead again. He was perfectly trained and was counting on running only a three-lap race. Now therefore he could afford to make a strong effort and by degrees he took a good ten-yard lead of Sharp, who at once began to fall behind.

Winter of Blake's made an effort to catch Laing and hold him, but using up all his reserve wind gave up shortly afterwards, and Mayes, of Canaby's, came up beside Marriott, whilst Rick dropped back. These were practically the positions of the leaders when the bell went for the last lap. At that welcome sound, which to a certain extent relieves a second string of the necessity of keeping up the pace, Laing dropped back again, Marriott set his teeth, pulled himself together, and settled down to it. Mayes and Menzies were both in front of him. He saw Laing being gradually brought back, realised that the honour of Godwin's was devolving upon his shoulders. He lengthened his stride a little. Looking keenly ahead he noticed that Menzies was outrunning Mayes, and fast overtaking Laing. He increased his own pace a little more. Mayes, running unsteadily, came back and was passed. Then he found Laing only just in front of him, whilst Menzies was leading. He heard Laing breathing heavily. As he came up to his shoulder, the Harley little tin god turned his head and smiled cheerfully.

"You've got him," he said, jerkily. "He's shaky even now. I can't do much more. Good luck."

The words acted as a magnetic spur. Marriott gripped his corks tighter and realised with intense joy that he was overtaking Menzies—he, a mere junior, without any school colours at all, was running for his house; the captain of the school had made the pace for him; his heart was almost bursting with pride—then he found that he was but a yard behind Menzies, and there was half a lap to go. The monitor looked over his shoulder and made a stumbling effort to draw away again. Marriott kept determinedly behind him. He heard distant shoutings from the crowd under the shadow of the school.

They urged him on. The two were running almost neck and neck. Twice Marriott made an effort to draw level and get in front; each time he seemed somehow to collide with Menzies. Then as he made his third attempt he realised why he was failing. Menzies was boring him. As he came up to the monitor's shoulder he saw him sway out in front of him, saw his elbow come out ready to keep him back. A great rage welled up within him. He realised too that he was tiring, although Menzies still seemed able to keep up the pace, and this served to discourage Marriott. For the fourth time he made his effort to get in front. He came up with Menzies, meaning to give him a wide berth. Suddenly an elbow came out and gave him a savage blow in the side. Marriott gasped, and stumbled. Menzies threw back his head and started his final spurt. Marriott, conscious that he was winded, made a despairing effort to catch his man—he had been trusted with the honour of his house, he realised that he was failing Laing—felt miserably alone. But he was not, as he thought, the only one who knew why he had failed to pass his man. Behind him Laing had been watching events keenly. Each time that he saw the two men level, then saw Marriott bored back, he realised that it was now doubly important for him to keep going. He was

desperately tired, but he meant Godwin's to win that race, and not through Menzies.

Folk in the audience were laughing and chuckling over the fact that Godwin's had actually got the mile in the palm of their hands. It struck them as being very humorous. They knew that Laing had been devoting all his energies to that event, and they also knew that each of his men had an excellent chance of winning. Yet now that they saw for themselves that Godwin's were leading easily, they laughed and slapped their thighs, not knowing the inner history of the race.

The first intimation that Marriott had that help was coming was brought him in a sudden double intensity in the shouting. Then he heard the patter of a man running behind him. He glanced hurriedly over his shoulder and with a sudden wild delight realised that it was Laing—the second string whose work was done. He was pale and his hair was hanging limply over his forehead. Thin lines of perspiration showed on his cheeks. He looked done. But Marriott, knowing Laing, felt confident, felt that the responsibility was taken off his young shoulders.

Laing came up to him. Marriott tried to speak, and just emitted a grunt, but Laing was looking straight in front. His eyes were fixed glassily on Menzies, just turning into the straight, five or six yards in front. Laing was of the wiry little build that makes a good long distance runner, but his Rugger accident had deprived him of the stamina necessary to make him really first class. Sometimes, however, sheer courage will take the place of physical strength in an emergency. It was so now. As he, too, turned, stumbling a little, into the straight he was only three yards behind his man. Menzies never looked round. He kept doggedly on his course. Possibly he thought it was Marriott, and knew that his bulk could always bore him out. But somehow Laing was covering the ground faster. Right along the straight, men were leaning over the ropes waving hats and shouting, and Laing realised that they were cheering *him*. He did not stumble again—as they neared the tape he made one great effort to get up—he was two yards behind—one yard. A crowd of men had come out to urge him on. They were running along beside him, shouting "Up! Up!" in his ear. Some—stewards—were waving top hats foolishly in his face. Their cries conveyed very little to him, but he kept on. Now he was beside Menzies, who he knew would not dare to bump or bore now, with a crowd of men watching keenly. The tape was coming nearer. Other men joined the enthusiasts beside him. He felt that he was running with a battalion of pacemakers, was dimly conscious of mighty shouting right along the front of the school. Things generally seemed distorted. Menzies appeared to have the stride of a giant giraffe. As he ran on it seemed as if the tape were being gradually taken along in front of him enticingly like a carrot before a donkey. At last he knew that the time had come. He closed his eyes, and flung himself forward—felt the tape break before him. Then Menzies stumbled and fell heavily. As he went down he caught Laing's shoulder, and the Harley captain went spinning to one side, fell, and lay flat on the cool grass, chest heaving, mouth open, hands clutching at the ground. Godwin's had won—they were second and third, too—a record. But that was not the point.

Menzies could not crow.

That was the point. Menzies had not won.

Men crowded round him chanting praises and gasping with delight. Ladies' handkerchiefs were still being waved above the heads that lined the ropes. Someone was starting the school song.

Marriott had laboured up, a good third; he bent, gasping, over Laing.

"Good man," he said, sobbing for breath. "Good man. I—I'm awfully sorry. I tried to get past him. He wouldn't let me. Then at last he dug his elbow in my side and winded me. I'm awfully sorry."

Laing looked up wearily and got to his feet unsteadily.

"Rotten bad luck," said he. "It was disgusting. But don't say anything about it. Mum's the word. He hasn't won, anyway—and Godwin's have made a record."

Marriott smiled apologetically.

Mr. Godwin, although at the sports, had not taken any interest in the race. When eventually it was mentioned to him that never before had one house gained the first three places in the mile, he raised his eyebrows.

"Indeed," said he, "and have they now?"

"Yes," they told him. "Your own house have done so."

He smiled sarcastically.

"Dear me," said he, "I suppose that is quite good!"

(To be continued.)

THE BEGINNER AND CYPRUS

PROBABLY it came as a great surprise to stamp-collecting readers of THE CAPTAIN to learn that Cyprus had been formally annexed by Great Britain, because there was a widespread belief, not without excuse from a philatelic point of view, that the island was British property already.

As a matter of fact, Britain merely stepped in as administrator of the island's affairs under the suzerainty of the Sultan of Turkey, to whom we paid an annual tribute of £92,800.

Cyprus, philatelically considered, is not one of the "easy" countries. To begin with, a specialist would desire to start his album with the postage stamps first used in Cyprus, namely, the Turkish stamps of a period prior to the British domination. Next he would take (if he could get them) the stamps of Great Britain used without surcharge during the years 1878-1880. These belong to the class known as "English used Abroad," which, as I explained in a recent CAPTAIN chat on the subject, are only to be separated from the ordinary British stamps of the period by their

Cyprus stamps of the last three British reigns.

distinctive postmarks. I had no space to deal in detail with the special office-numbers employed in various parts of the world, but in this article on Cyprus it may be well to show just what cancellations should be looked for, especially as many are now of great value.

In the following list I give, first, the postmark, then the name of the town in Cyprus to which it is allotted, and, lastly, the face-values of the British stamps employed there. Bear in mind that all these stamps were of the Queen Victoria period.

942, Lanarca, ½d., 1d., 2d., 2½d., 4d., 6d., 1s.
969, Nikosia, ½d., 1d., 2d., 2½d., 4d.
974, Baffo, 1d., 2d., 2½d.
975, Famagusta, ½d., 1d., 1½d., 2d., 2½d
981, Limasol, 1d., 2d., 2½d.
982, Kyrenia, ½d., 1d., 2d., 1s.
D47, Paolymedia, 1d., 2d.
D48, Army Headquarters, 1d., 2d.

Considerably over a hundred specimens would be required to make up a complete collection of these stamps, with their various plate-numbers; and, as I have said before, many of them are of great rarity.

Our specialist would next turn to the postage stamps proper of the island of Cyprus, in which class we must of course include the British stamps specially overprinted for use there.

It is at this point—namely, the issue of 1880—that the young collector may be advised to start his "Cyprus" pages; and if he succeeds in making anything like a full showing of the issues made from that time down to the present day, he will have a collection to be proud of. One very comforting fact about the stamps of Cyprus may be stated at the outset: all the issues, from first to last have the one standard perforation, "14." That is one great bugbear out of the way, is it not? The study of perforations, I admit, has been of very great value to philately; but, for my part, the continual "gauging" of stamps to ascertain their "perfs." is a job I hate, and I dare say many CAPTAIN readers are of my opinion.

The ordinary British stamps overprinted with the name "Cyprus" were the ½*d.*, 1*d.*, 2½*d.*, 4*d.*, 6*d.*, and 1*s.* values. These would be subdivided by our luxurious friend, the specialist, into the various plate-numbers comprised in the supplies of these stamps sent out to the island; but the beginner must content himself with just one specimen of each denomination, regardless of minor varieties.

The same remarks apply also to the overprints applied to the 1*d.* red British stamps in the year 1881 to provide new supplies of ½*d.* stamps, and also a new denomination, "30 paras." Here there are several scarce varieties, such as double, triple, and even quadruple surcharges, inverted surcharges, "80 paras" instead of "30 paras," etc. The very complete and careful lists of these stamps given in the leading catalogues will furnish all the information Captainites will need, should they be so fortunate as to strike a rich "find" of early Cyprus!

Special and "permanent" stamps for Cyprus (called by philatelists "permanent" for want of a better word) were first issued in 1881, bearing the head of Queen Victoria. In accordance with the usual British policy of studying local custom and convenience, the values were expressed in Turkish currency—a practice which continues to the present day. To the values originally issued—namely, ½, 1, 2, 4, and 6 piastres—the 30 paras was added in 1882, and the 12 piastres at a later date.

Very soon after the issue of these stamps it was found that the similarity of colour of the ½ piastre and the 4 piastres stamps gave rise to great confusion; and it was decided to overprint the former value with the bold numeral "½," this being twice applied to each stamp, at left and right of the Queen's head. At about the same time a 30 paras stamp was created by overprinting this value on the 1 piastre stamp. Here, again, there are varieties. In the "½" overprint on the ½ piastre two distinct types occur, and of Type II (the large numerals) there are varieties in the space between the left-hand and right-hand overprints.

Thus far the stamps of Cyprus are watermarked "C.C.," but in the 1882-1886 series this changes to the more modern "C.A."

The bi-coloured printings of Cyprus began in 1894, when also additional new values—9, 18, and 45 piastres—were introduced. The King Edward series, which began to appear in 1903, reproduced with only slight modifications the same colour scheme; but at this point the chief philatelic interests shifts from colour to watermark. In the period beginning 1904 the watermark for all British Colonial stamps was changed from "single 'C.A.'" to "multiple 'C.A.,'" and in the case of two or three Colonies this change was responsible for the creation of great varieties. Cyprus was one of these, the higher values of the King Edward set, and notably the 9, 18, and 45 piastres, proving to be held in only very small quantities by the stamp trade.

In connection with this second King Edward issue two new values of very small denomination made their appearance, the 5 and 10 paras. The 5 paras is, I think, the lowest face value to be found in the whole range of British King's Head stamps.

The stamps with King George's head are in urrent use, and call for little comment. It is highly unlikely that the present stamps will undergo any change in the immediate future, but it is quite within the bounds of possibility that these might be used for overprinting purposes in the event of any annexations of territory on the adjacent mainland during the military operations against Turkey.

NOTEWORTHY NEW ISSUES

BOSNIA has a new stamp of 10 krone, issued just prior to the outbreak of the war. It is uniform with other stamps of the current type, and bears the Austrian Emperor's head.

BELGIUM.—As if Belgians had not enough to endure already, the invaders have provided them with Germanised postage stamps in the shape of the current issue of the German Empire with the overprint "Belgien."

FRANCE.—To help the Red Cross funds a quantity of the current 10c. stamps were overprinted with the super-added value "5c." and the Cross of Geneva, and sold for 15 centimes apiece. These were afterwards withdrawn from circulation, and replaced by a specially designed stamp of the "Sower" type. In this the original value "10c." is placed in the upper left corner, whilst the additional value "5c." surmounted by the Red Cross is in a white tablet at foot. On the right of the stamp, reading upwards, is the inscription "CROIX-ROUGE POSTES."

MONACO also has a Red Cross issue fashioned pretty much like the French.

LEVANT.—Consequent on the action of Turkey in abolishing all foreign post-offices in the Levant as from October 1st, we can now close the pages in our albums devoted to Austrian, British, French, German, Italian, and Russian Levant.

TOGOLAND.—The Franco-British forces now occupying this ex-German colony are using Gold Coast stamps, without overprint. There has, however, been an overprinting of the Germans' own stamps, commandeered by our forces at the Post Office at Lomé. This is a welcome bit of revenge for the Germans' "Belgien" atrocities. Messrs. Ewen's Colonial Stamp Market, Norwood, have shown me specimens of the 3pf., 5pf., 20pf., 25pf., and 30pf. Togo's overprinted in three lines "Togo Anglo-French Occupation." The 3pf. and 5pf. have an additional line of overprint, giving a new value—"Half Penny" on the 3pf., and "One Penny" on the 5pf.; but the higher values for some reason bear only their original denominations in pfennigs.

A Togoland stamp overprinted by the Franco-British who have now seized this German Colony.

Burton rushed to the window, and wrenching away the bars of the flaming shutters, joyfully hailed the khaki-clad Lancers who had reined up below.

THE PRISONERS . . OF THE CHATEAU

A Story of the War

By
HERBERT STRANG

***

Illustrated by
F. C. Dickinson

A YOUNG British airman, Edward Burton, whose machine has broken down, enters a French château in the character of a deaf mute, the château being in the hands of a party of Germans, commanded by Major Schwikkard. This man entertains feelings of revenge against the owner of the château, the Marquis du Breuil, and especially against his son, a captain in the French Army, now lying there wounded. Burton overhears a plot of the major's to burn the château next morning. Learning that weapons are concealed in the captain's room, Burton is about to enter it when he overhears Major Schwikkard brutally taunting the wounded captain. As the German is rising from his chair, he finds two revolvers pointed at him by Burton.

PART TWO

V

COVERING the shrinking German with the revolvers, Burton glanced round the room, and moved towards an electric bell-push in one of the walls.

"Does it communicate with the kitchen?" he asked the wounded man, who nodded—weakness and the thrill of emotion bereft him of speech.

Burton rang the bell—a single sharp ring. In a few moments Pierre appeared. The expression of foreboding dread in his eyes gave way to consternation, joy, eagerness, in turn.

"Some stout cord, Pierre," said Burton, "and shut the door behind you. My revolver may go off, and it would be a pity to disturb your master's guests."

The irony was lost upon Major Schwikkard. The turning of the tables seemed to have completely unnerved him. It is, perhaps, not true that all bullies are cowards at heart; but a man is tested by adversity.

Pierre soon returned with the cord, and in a few minutes he trussed the German securely, Burton standing over him with a revolver.

"Now a gag!" Burton said. "Take one of those strips of linen: *monsieur le capitaine* will spare us one of his bandages."

At this the German found voice at last.

"You—you treacherous——"

"Not so loud, *monsieur l'espion*!" said Burton, fingering the revolver.

The German gurgled.

"You will—all be—shot," he gasped, "as soon as they discover——"

"*Allons!*" exclaimed Pierre, thrusting the gag firmly between his jaws, "it is done, monsieur."

"There is an unoccupied room, Pierre?" asked Burton.

"Assuredly, monsieur, at the end of the passage."

"Then we will take him there, and tie him down on the bed. His friends will no doubt miss him in the morning, and release him—perhaps about breakfast time!"

Such was Burton's contempt for the man that he felt no touch of compunction at the effect his words produced. Pierre and he were carrying the German between them. His staring eyes proclaimed an agony of terror. At dawn the wing was to be fired. He had carefully provided against premature discovery. His friends would be still sleeping off their liquor. He saw himself lost.

He writhed, his lips worked, but the inexorable gag prevented articulation. The two carried him into the farther room, laid him face upwards on the bed, and bound him firmly to the four posts. The moonlight, streaming through the window, threw a ghastly pallor upon his countenance. His eyes pled for mercy, and Burton, after a few moments' hesitation, relented. If the terror-stricken wretch would show any spark of good feeling, he would relieve his fears. He loosed the gag.

Schwikkard gulped, moistened his lips, and spoke gaspingly.

"You have me in your power . . . but your revenge will recoil on you. . . . Release me; I will leave the château at once. . . . I will agree to any terms. . . . You shall go unharmed."

"You would bribe me?" answered Burton, coldly, disgusted that the man had said no word of regret. "You have given us no reason to believe that your word is more to be trusted than any other German's. We are not going to kill you, in spite of your threats to a helpless gentleman and your treatment of madame. Your threats, perhaps, were not meant in earnest——"

"No, no," cried the German eagerly. "It was only—only a joke."

"Ah! such a joke is in very bad taste, so we will leave you to think it over."

Remorselessly he replaced the gag, and they left him to his reflections.

Returning to the invalid's room, they consulted in whispers. The captain had closed his eyes. Full of admiration for his self-control in giving no sign of having observed the stealthy approach from the door, Burton hoped that the wounded man might be strong enough to bear removal from the château to the curé's house, and thence to the British lines.

"Can we move him?" he asked Pierre.

"Ah, no, monsieur," replied the old man, bending over the bed and gazing with poignancy of affection at the haggard face. "It would kill him."

Burton pondered, while Pierre spoke gently to his master's son and poured wine between his lips. The captain's eyes were eloquent of gratitude.

"There is only one thing to be done," said Burton at last. "Our army is slowly advancing: we must hold the château until it comes."

"But, monsieur, it is impossible!" cried the old man. "The bosches are in the house: they fill the village."

"True; but this wing is defensible against anything except artillery, and we have a valuable hostage in the major. Let us see what monsieur le marquis says."

They went to the room where they had left the old general and his wife. Burton explained to the former what he had already done, and what he proposed to do. There was a gleam in the old soldier's eyes.

"*Ma foi, monsieur, la bonne idée!*" he cried. "It makes me young again." Then he glanced at his wife, and his face was full of trouble. "*Chérie,*" he said, "there will be danger. It will be no place for you. Will you not go to the curé's? It is dark: Pierre would lead you across the fields."

"*Mon ami,*" replied the old lady firmly, taking the general's hand, "my place is with you and with Fernand. Is it for nothing that I am a soldier's wife?"

The marquis pressed her hand; his eyes were moist.

"Monsieur, it shall be," he said, simply, turning to Burton.

"Will you come with me then, monsieur?" said Burton. "Pierre, bring food and candles from the kitchen, also a chisel if you have one."

The marquise returned to her son's room; Burton, accompanied by the general, made a rapid tour of the floor. The head of the kitchen staircase came to the passage near the door of the servant's bedroom in which the captain was now laid. The window of the room, overlooking the parterres in front of the house, was opposite the door. There were two doors, one on each side of the passage, opening into rooms both of which communicated with the bedroom. One of these had been temporarily occupied by monsieur and madame; in the other, Major Schwikkard was confined. At the farther end of the passage was a door opening on to a landing, from which the grand staircase descended to the hall below.

The general's experienced eye marked the possibilities of the situation.

"They will come up the grand staircase, monsieur," he said. "This door is our outer defence. We must barricade it. If they fire through it, their shots will fly straight along the passage to the door of my son's room. They will hardly penetrate that and the barricade that we shall raise behind it. The Germans will break down this door and come into the passage. We must then defend the rooms."

"And if they attack from the outside, monsieur?"

"The windows are shuttered. You observed that, and sent for a chisel—to loophole the shutters?"

"That was my idea."

"It was good. We must barricade the shutters also in such a way that we can approach the loopholes obliquely. Their Mauser bullets will easily penetrate the shutters, although they are of oak."

"Here is Pierre. We must be very quiet and very quick; the sentry below will wonder at the prolonged absence of his chief."

"Is there a sentry?"

"There was to be. I will see."

He tip-toed to the head of the grand staircase, and peeped over the rail. One of the orderlies was standing bolt upright against the door.

The three men removed their boots, and carried every portable piece of furniture to the doors and windows, piling them one upon another, and strutting them with chairs, towel horses, and other small objects. The chisel proved a useless tool for boring the hard oak. There was a fire in the captain's room. Burton made a poker red hot, and with this burnt a few loopholes in the shutters. After nearly an hour's strenuous work, carried on with extraordinary noiselessness, the preparations were made.

The old marquis was now trembling with excitement and fatigue. His wife gave him some wine, and, while he rested, Burton looked to the weapons. The German's revolver and his own were full. The marquise brought out two more, a rifle, and ammunition, from the depths of a cupboard.

There was now only to await events. It was nearly midnight. How long would it be before the sentry became uneasy at his commander's absence? With German stolidity, and the Prussian soldier's fear of his officer, he might never think of moving from his post. But after a time he would certainly be relieved, and possibly a consultation with the relief would lead to action.

As Burton sat nursing the rifle, he was conscious of a smell of burning, distinct from the smell caused by boring the wood. Pierre had been absent for some little time in the room where the major lay. He came through the communicating door, followed by smoke. Burton started up.

"Have they set the place on fire already?" he asked.

"No, no, monsieur," the man replied, with a strange smile, "I was merely burning some paper."

Thinking that there were perhaps some documents which must not fall into the Germans' hands, Burton asked no further questions. Once or twice again the same grim smile appeared about the old servitor's lips, and Burton concluded that he was pleased at having accomplished a necessary task.

Two hours passed in almost silent waiting. The only movements were those of the marquise in tending her son. Then, about two o'clock, they heard someone try the handle of the door at the end of the passage. Burton had locked it. In a moment there was a tap at the door. No one answered. It was repeated, louder and more energetically. Burton nodded to Pierre.

"What is it?" the man asked in German.

"The Herr Major; is he here?"

"Yes; he is resting; he must not be disturbed."

Footsteps were heard receding. The sentry was apparently satisfied.

"We must give them warning some time before dawn," said Burton, "otherwise the man Vossling will carry out his orders, and set fire to the staircase."

"Knowing that the major is in this wing?" said the general.

"He may not know that. On the other hand he may. Then he will suspect that something is wrong. In the one case, we should be burnt alive; in the other, the man would be uneasy and come to wake the major. But the longer we delay the more chance of relief. The sun rises at about half-past six; the place was to be fired before dawn. How will the orderly interpret his instructions?"

"It is a nice calculation," said the marquis, who with renewed strength had recovered his keenness. "Will he wait until the darkness begins to thin, or abstain from setting up a rival to the sunlight? I do not know the German mind."

Time dragged for Burton. The marquis and his man dozed; the marquise, in the intervals of her ministrations, read a book of Hours. The slow clock ticked on the mantelshelf; three struck, and four.

At a little after four there was a loud knock on the door.

"At last!" said Burton, half in relief, half in misgiving. The old men started up, and grasped each a revolver. The lady put down her book and clasped her hands on her lap, pressing her lips together as if to shut in a cry.

"Who is there?" demanded Burton in French.

"Where is Major Schwikkard?" came the answer. An officer was speaking.

Burton saw that further concealment was useless.

"He is here," he called down the passage, "a prisoner."

The German swore.

"You dogs! You imbeciles!" he shouted, shaking the door. "Let me in. What do you mean by this buffoonery? If it is your trick, you white-headed old fool, you shan't escape hanging because you were once a soldier. You

and your man are civilians in arms. You shall die by inches. Let me in, I say."

There was no reply. The officer shook the door again.

"Force it with your shoulder, Vossling," he said with an oath.

The door creaked, but the lock held. Next moment there was a crash; he had blown in the lock with a shot from his revolver. But the door banged against the wardrobe placed against it. The German swore again. Then there was silence. In a few minutes, several voices were heard.

"Remove this barricade, you old French fools," said the captain, in a voice thick with sleep, wine, and rage, "or we will blow the place to atoms."

"And Major Schwikkard?" said Burton, quietly.

"That is not an old man speaking," said the captain to his companions. "There was no one else in the house except the old hag and the wounded man."

"And the deaf mute," said one of the others.

"*Potz—tausend!* If that dirty fellow has played tricks on us I will crop his ears and cut his tongue out. Give them a taste."

A crowd of Germans thrust their rifles through the jagged rents in the panels. Burton fired, and a yell proclaimed that his shot had gone home.

Then revolvers spoke; three shots crashed through the wood, flew along the passage, through the open door opposite, and finally embedded themselves in the shutter. A moment later Burton, stepping to the edge of the doorway, lifted his rifle and fired. There was a cry from beyond the barricaded door, a volley of oaths, and a general stampede for safety to the landing.

For a few minutes there was silence. The marquise stroked her son's hot brow. Then a fusillade burst through the door and the stout barricade behind it. The bullets pattered on the shutters, but the three men had stood

back out of the line of fire. None of them was struck by a shot, but a splinter of wood from the wardrobe glanced off the inner door and grazed Pierre's cheek. Again and again the fusillade was repeated. The defenders, husbanding their ammunition, and careful not to expose themselves, did not reply; they waited in grim silence, to meet the enemy's next move.

The failure of their efforts enraged and nonplussed the Germans. Warned by the shot that had wounded one of them, they made no attempt to storm the barricade. There was a short interval, and they were heard discussing the situation in low tones. The result was made clear in a few minutes. Bullets began to crash through the shutters to all the windows.

"They have brought up men from the village, and surrounded the wing," said the general.

"We shall be in no danger," said Burton. "Firing from the ground, their shots will go through the ceilings."

In a short time this became apparent to the assailants. The attack ceased for a little; then, through the window of the room in which the major lay, bullets flew horizontally across the room, a few inches above his head.

"They will kill their own officer!" cried Burton. "We can't leave him helpless in his present position."

"He deserves no pity," said the general. "Still, we are not Germans. My camp bed is there, lower than the bed he is on, and easily moved. Let us place him on that."

"*Mon Dieu!* It is the bed you slept on in '70, monsieur," cried Pierre.

"What then, my friend?"

"It is sacrilege, monsieur; it is treason to France—pardon, *mon maître*, I should not have said that, but it would tear my heart to see a German on that bed."

"Let that be our *revanche*," said the general, quietly.

"I hope a German bullet may find him," muttered the old man, as the others released the stiff figure upon the bed. They kept on their knees to avoid the flying bullets, and so transferred the German from the larger bedstead to the low single bed on which the general had made the campaign of '70. They placed it against the wall in the corner near the window, out of danger. Leaving Pierre on his knees to fire up if any German tried to enter the room through the window, they returned to the invalid's bedroom.

"Strange that they should be so reckless of killing their own officer," remarked Burton.

"They are callous ruffians," the general replied. "Besides, it is war; one life is of little account. That is what we all have to remember. The individual life is nothing; the cause is all."

The passage and the rooms were filling with suffocating fumes. The noise of shots, of splintering wood, of shouting men, was incessant. Hitherto, save for the single rifle shot fired by Burton, the defenders had not used their weapons. At the end of the passage they could not have escaped the hail of bullets; from the side doors they could not take direct aim. But the attack had now become so violent that reprisals must be attempted, or the defences would be utterly shattered. An idea came suddenly to Burton. Closing the door leading to the sick man's room, so that the passage was completely dark, he passed into the next room, shoved a table through the doorway, set a chair upon it, and waiting until there was a slight lull in the attack, climbed upon the chair.

Standing thus above the enemy's line of fire, and in darkness, he was able to see through the gaps made in the barricade and the door, a faint light filtering through from the lamp in the hall below. A crowd of Germans had come quite close to the door, and were thrusting their rifles through the jagged rents in the panels. Burton took careful aim at one of them, fired, and a yell proclaimed that his bullet had gone home. A second shot claimed its victim. Then the enemy, cursing with rage, rushed back from the door, and for a time continued firing from the angles of the landing.

Meanwhile the window at which Pierre was left had been driven in, shutter and all, by repeated blows of an axe wielded by a man mounted on a ladder. The old man fired just as the German was stepping from the ladder to the window-sill. Shot through the heart, the intruder fell headlong. None of his comrades was bold enough to emulate his daring.

The general had been chafing at his inability to take a positive part in the fight. Stimulated by the success Burton had had from his post of vantage, the old warrior's Gallic spirit threw aside caution. Slipping into the passage, he was in the act of placing another chair on the table when a bullet fired from the angle on the landing struck a brass bracket on the wall at his left, rebounded from it, and buried itself with a splinter of brass in the old man's arm. He reeled. Burton sprang down to assist him,

and carried him fainting into the bedroom, where his wife received him into her arms.

"Hard luck!" thought Burton, for the shot which wounded the general was the last to be fired for a considerable time.

VI

The enemy ceased firing, both within the château and without. Wondering what their next move would be, Burton remained heedfully on guard, rifle in hand. Pierre, overcome with grief at the collapse of his master, was assisting the marquise to restore him and to bind up his wound.

Presently the captain's voice came through the door.

"General du Breuil!"

"What do you want?" Burton called.

"You treacherous hound! I have nothing to say to you," cried the German, angrily. "I speak to the general."

"The general deputes me to answer for him. If you will not speak to me, you will go unanswered."

"Who are you?" the German asked with an oath.

"The general's deputy," replied Burton.

"That will not avail you," cried the officer, sneeringly. "I have sent to the village to fetch that rascally smith who assisted your imposture. When he has told me who you are, he shall be deaf and dumb for his last minute in life."

Burton felt chill from top to toe. He had not thought of the peril in which his stratagem might involve the smith. The Germans were capable of any enormity. But he could do nothing—except gain time. Would the British advance guard arrive before all was lost?

"Well, if the general chooses to employ a cur as his deputy, so be it," the German went on. "Like man, like master. Take this message to the general: If he does not yield, I will fire the château."

"And if we surrender?" sad Burton.

"We will deal with him as a soldier. He will be tried by court-martial."

"On what charge?"

"That, having been a soldier, with no excuse of ignorance of the laws of war, he, as a civilian, resists the military power."

"And if he is found guilty?"

"His fate will lie in the discretion of the court."

"And his old servant?"

The German, anxious to gain his ends without further fighting, hesitated, then replied, equivocally:—

"The court will decide."

"And myself?"

"The court will decide," replied the officer, impatiently.

"Is that all?"

The German smote the door angrily.

"Your answer!" he cried.

"You will give us a few minutes for consultation?"

"Five minutes: no more."

Burton stood on his chair, holding his rifle.

"I heard it, monsieur," said the voice of the marquise in an undertone behind him. "My poor husband is incapable of speech. We must leave all to you. But can we resist fire?"

"Madame, I seek to gain time. We can expect no mercy from the Germans. There is but one hope: that our army will arrive in time. If that hope fails——"

"Spare us fire, monsieur, I implore you. It is frightful."

She wrung her hands piteously.

"Trust me, madame; hope, and pray," said Burton.

When the five minutes were up, the German hailed him. "Your answer—quickly."

"*Monsieur le capitaine*," said Burton, suavely, "we cannot surrender yet. We should like to kill a few more Germans."

The officer let out a vicious oath.

"Then roast!" he cried. "You and the rest."

"Including your worthy commandant, *mon capitaine*? Don't forget him."

"You have murdered him."

"That is the explanation of their reckless shooting," thought Burton. He replied: "Not at all. We are not Germans."

"You lie!" cried the captain, whose anger was rapidly getting the better of him.

"Did I not remind you, monsieur, that we are not Germans?"

The officer was speechless with rage. Burton imagined his quandary. It would be awkward for him if he set fire to the château and burnt his superior. His next words showed his state of mind.

"You say Major Schwikkard is alive. Prove it."

"Nothing easier, *mon capitaine*," said Burton. "You must give me a few minutes. He is a heavy man."

He saw that there was nothing to lose, possibly something to gain, by convincing the German. Slipping down from his perch, he

hurried to Pierre, who was kneeling at his master's chair.

"Come with me," he said, and led him into the room where the major lay gagged and bound. The bed was a light one. They carried it to the window, and tilted it on end. Leaving Pierre to maintain it in that position, Burton returned to the chair, and kept silence until the captain impatiently demanded his proofs.

"I must trouble you to descend and go to the rear of the wing, monsieur," said Burton. "It is dark: no doubt you have a flashlight?"

"We have, what then? Do not play with me."

"Far from it, monsieur. I am aware of the gravity of your position. Go down to the garden at the rear, and look up at the window that will then face you. But do not flash your light up until I give the word."

The German snarled under his breath. Burton caught the sounds of a whispered consultation at the stair-head. A minute or two later the officer called up from the garden. Burton withdrew the piled-up furniture, opened the shutters, and helped Pierre to lift the bed, tilted as it was, to the window. The major's form, stretched upon it, somewhat resembled a mummy in a case.

"Now, monsieur!" Burton called.

The glaring light of an acetylene lamp was thrown up towards the window. It fell on the major's face, which, ghastly in itself, looked deathlike in the glare.

"He is dead!" the captain shouted.

"Not at all—only afraid; he overheard your amiable intentions. We will demonstrate." He turned to Pierre, saying: "Fetch some pepper."

"There is none upstairs, monsieur. I dare not go below."

"Some snuff?"

"*Ah, oui! monsieur le marquis* likes his pinch. A moment, monsieur."

He went into the bedroom, took a snuff-box from his master's pocket, and returned. Burton opened the box, took a large pinch of snuff, and held it to the major's nose. There was a slight but dramatic pause. All was silent. Then the major's features became convulsed, and the silence was rent by a resounding sneeze.

"Now, *monsieur le capitaine*," cried Burton, "could a dead German sneeze like that?"

There were snarls of rage from below, mingled, Burton thought, with suppressed laughter from some of the troopers who had gathered in the background behind their officers.

"With your good pleasure we will resume our interesting conversation above," said Burton.

With Pierre he lowered the bed and carried it back to its former position. Then he replaced the shutters.

"Another ten minutes gained," he thought.

The ten minutes were prolonged to fifteen. The captain was consulting with his subordinates. Presently he called through the door:—

"Are you there?"

"Always at your service, monsieur."

"Seeing that Major Schwikkard is apparently alive, we will permit you to surrender on terms."

"What terms, monsieur?"

"You shall be allowed to pass through the German lines."

"I should like to consult the general, monsieur," said Burton, still talking to gain time.

"Five minutes."

"Let us say ten, monsieur," Burton pleaded. "It is, you will admit, a serious matter."

"Ten, then; not a minute more."

At the end of the ten minutes the captain called for an answer.

"The general wishes to know, monsieur, what guarantee he has for safety."

"The word of a German officer," snarled the captain. "Be quick!"

Waiting a minute or so, Burton said:—

"The general has a little difficulty in making up his mind—pardonable at his age. You give him another ten minutes, monsieur?"

"Three; not a second more," cried the German, completely hoodwinked by Burton's tone, and unaware of the vital consideration in Burton's mind—the return of Captain Rolfe to headquarters.

"Very well, monsieur. I will bring the general's answer in three minutes."

The marquise and Pierre were holding their breath. The same thought possessed them both; to what lengths would this audacious Englishman go?

The period elapsed; the captain called peremptorily for an answer.

"The general, monsieur, has considered your offer," said Burton, "and he feels safer where he is."

At last the German's besotted intelligence was penetrated by the suspicion that he had been played with. He poured out his venom in a torrent of virulent abuse, snatched at his revolver, and fired point-blank into the

darkness. The bullet struck one of the legs of Burton's chair, the chair broke under him, and he fell with a crash. The effect of the shot, heard but not seen by the Germans, was hailed by them with a shout of triumph. But Burton crawled into the bedroom, with no worse injury than bruised elbows and shins.

VII

Into the next few minutes were crowded, as it seemed to Burton in reminiscence, the events of hours. Emboldened by the supposed success of the captain's shot, the Germans renewed the attack with great violence and determination, both within and without. Repeated onslaughts were made on the tottering door, which was now almost completely splintered, and on the barricade of furniture behind it. Burton had lost no time in replacing the broken chair, and twice his steady fire from near the ceiling sent the attackers back in a disorderly heap.

Meanwhile two of the windows and their shutters had been riddled by long-distance fire, and men were again mounting on ladders to break into the rooms. At one, Pierre played a manful part; at the other, the general, bracing himself as the peril grew greater, stood holding his revolver in his left hand, and shot man after man.

The grey light of early morning was now stealing into the room, depriving the defenders of the advantage of darkness. The shouts of the men, the reports of the guns, the suffocating fumes, made the place an inferno. At the bedside the marquise still bravely held her post. Burton was too busy to notice the extreme pallor of her face, the trembling of her hands, the agonised look of terror in her eyes.

With a wild shout the infuriated Germans crashed through the broken door, and began to pull away the barricade at the end of the passage. While they were doing so, it was impossible for their comrades to continue firing; the attack was interrupted, and Burton shot down many of the enemy among the pile of shattered furniture. But he recognised that, the Germans having won an entrance to the passage, it was only a question of minutes before the defence was overwhelmed.

At this moment he heard a groan in his rear. Pierre, badly hit, had staggered from the window he had been defending through the communicating doorway into the invalid's room. "It is all over with me!" he moaned, sinking at his mistress's feet. The crack of the general's revolver still sounded at short intervals from the next room. Here and there the woodwork was smouldering; before long it would burst into flames.

"There is only one thing to be done," thought Burton, resolved to maintain the struggle to the end, desperate as the position was. "We must keep together, and make a last stand at the captain's bed."

Filling his magazine, he poured shot after shot into the enemy crowding in the doorway and bursting through the barrier. The survivors reeled back under this withering fire, giving Burton time to leap from his perch, run into the room, and call the general to his side. Pierre was helpless, the invalid was half dead, only the general and Burton remained to stem a tide which would soon flow back with tenfold force along the passage.

The two men posted themselves before the bed, ready to meet the final rush. Unknown to them, the marquise had taken the revolver from Pierre's hand and stood in front of her son, like a lioness defending her cub. The attack was renewed simultaneously on all sides, but a strange inadvertence on the part of the enemy intervened to deal a partial check. They were shooting from the demolished barricade at the end of the passage. At the same time their comrades outside had begun to fire through the window in a direct line with it. Several of the Germans in the passage fell to the bullets of their own friends.

Growling at this mishap, the unwounded men broke through the doors at the sides into the rooms. Burton had closed and barricaded, as well as he could, the communicating doors, but he felt with a sinking heart that a few seconds would bring the unequal contest to its inevitable end.

The din was terrific, and with it was now mingled a surprising sound from outside the house.

"A machine gun!" said Burton to himself. "They will shatter their own men!" He had no more time to think about it. The door of the room to his left fell in with a crash; in the glimmer of dawn the opening was crowded with Germans. Burton and the general emptied their revolvers into the mass; it collapsed, and the two men hastily filled their chambers to meet the next, the final rush.

But there was a strange lull in the rifle fire. From outside again came the crack of a machine gun, and, in a momentary interval of silence, Burton caught the sound of cheers. Surely they were not German cheers? He thrilled with the conviction that the voices this time

had the true British ring. He waited the expected rush; it did not come. The doorway was clear; heavy feet were trampling in frenzied haste along the passage. With the intermittent rattle of machine guns close at hand, came unmistakable British shouts.

Burton rushed to the window. The shutters were now in flames. Wrenching away the bars, he thrust his head through the shattered glass, and joyfully hailed the khaki-clad Lancers who had reined up below. There was not a living German to be seen. The greensward and the trampled parterres were strewn with prostrate forms. And with a rattle and clank a battery of horse artillery galloped upon the scene.

"We are saved, madame!" cried Burton, turning back into the room. "Our Lancers have put the Germans to flight."

"*Dieu merci!*" murmured the lady, falling on her knees at the bedside.

"*Ah, les braves Anglais!*" said the marquis, grasping Burton's right hand with his left, and jerking his arm up and down like a pump handle.

They looked at old Pierre, who had raised himself, and was feebly shouting: "*Vivent les Anglais! Vive monsieur le sourd-muet!*"

Then, to Burton's amazement, he cracked his fingers, and laughed like a lunatic.

"The poor fellow's brain is turned," said the marquis.

"No, no, monsieur, I am not crazy. Ah, ah! it was a trick to play!"

"What are you raving about, *mon vieux?*" asked the marquis.

"The smoke, monsieur! The paper! I gave the spy Schwikkard a foretaste. Ha! Surely he believed his last hour was come. See, monsieur, I burnt some brown paper in the stove under his nose. He would fire the château! *Eh bien!* assuredly he believed it was already on fire. It was *drôle*, monsieur—a fine trick, *n'est-ce pas?*"

"Schwikkard is our prisoner, without doubt," said Burton to the marquis. "Shall we untie him?"

At this moment entered Major Colpus of the Lancers, stepping gingerly over the wreck of door and furniture.

"A pretty mess they have made of it," he said, with double intent. "You are Burton?"

"That's my name."

"Captain Rolfe told us we should catch a half-regiment of hussars if we hurried. He rather expected you would be a prisoner. We got to the village just as some of the Germans were hauling away one Boitelet, the village smith, it appears. They left him to us, and he gave us an inkling that you were concerned in the rumpus here. The Germans have skedaddled; we have a few prisoners below. You have had a whack or two, I see."

"I wasn't aware of it," said Burton, looking with surprise at dark stains on his blouse. "The marquis and his man are both wounded."

"Glad to meet you, monsieur," said the officer, who, with British shyness, had affected to ignore the presence of all but Burton. Now, however, he greeted monsieur and madame courteously, knelt down and rendered capable first-aid to the marquis and Pierre, and seeing at a glance that the man in bed was very ill, dispatched Burton for the regimental medico.

It was not until the doctor was engaged with his patients that Burton found an opportunity of releasing Major Schwikkard, and handing him as a prisoner to the British officer. He was scarcely recognisable. The long vigil, with the dread of being roasted by his own instructions, had broken him both in body and mind. He looked years older. His cheeks had fallen in, his whole frame shook, and his hair was patched with white. When Major Colpus addressed him cheerily, he stammered, tried to complete a sentence, and burst into tears.

"Poor wretch!" the major murmured. "Doctor, here's another patient for you. Now, Mr. Burton, come and tell me all that has happened."

"I want to get back to my aeroplane," protested Burton.

"No hurry for that. Your friend, the smith, has borrowed a spare mount, and ridden off to the town to fetch something or other for it. I shan't let you off."

Burton growled that there was not much to tell, and turned to take his leave of the old marquis and his wife. In their overflowing emotion they could hardly speak.

"God bless you, monsieur!" said the marquise, brokenly. "You have saved us all. Your doctor says that my son will recover. Take a mother's thanks, and wear this, monsieur. May the good God preserve you!"

She took from her neck a chain bearing a richly jewelled cross, and pressed it into Burton's hand. He bade them good-bye.

"Adieu, monsieur!" said old Pierre, as Burton shook hands with him. "The wound—it is nothing. Your good doctor has stitched it up. I was not born to be killed by a bosche. *Ah, ça!* It was a good trick, monsieur, *n'est-ce pas?*"

THE GUEST AND THE GHOST

A STORY OF A CHRISTMAS VISIT TO LYNWOOD HALL.

By AUGUSTUS MUIR.

BARELY had I got settled in my compartment when a head was poked through the window. It was garnished with rimless pince-nez—and a scowl. In spite of my endeavours to block the view, the visitant descried vacant cushions, yanked open the door, and gravitated with travelling rug and portmanteau into the seat opposite me.

"Say, d'you own this stuffed egg-box?" he remarked, waving to the empty compartment.

Without waiting for a reply he produced a magazine and became engrossed; while he read he chewed. He looked nineteen; I was fourteen. Somehow, I disliked him. His portmanteau tickled me. It was coffee-coloured and mottled with steamship and hotel bills. On it I could read his life-story. Obviously he had visited Rangoon, Putney, Detroit, and Dundee. And his initials were B.K.M. It was quite an interesting little tale.

"'Sup with my grip?"

His voice was raw and rasping.

"Nothing," I stammered. "I——"

"Then screw off that gape," said the youth with initials B.K.M. "Quit it. Blink at your own baggage."

And, dash it all, my own portmanteau, insecurely placed, at that moment toppled ignominiously to my knees, flicking my hat askew in transit. The youth smiled evilly, and increased his jaw-work from thirty to thirty-five per minute.

After a bit I eyed his trousers. I couldn't help it. They were American trousers. They——

"'Sup with my pants?"

His voice had a grating edge.

I felt as if suddenly soused in soapsuds.

"S-sorry——" I began.

"You've got mosquito-bite or the brain-jerk," said the youth with the initials B.K.M. "Shut it!"

I hastened to close the window. The youth with the initials B.K.M. opened it.

"Did—did—didn't——" I began.

"Shoo!" said the American. "Have a snooze. Restful. You'll wake sane." The train was drawing to a stop. He got out. "Ta-ta!" He slammed the carriage door. "Good sleep!"

A bit dazed, I watched him saunter down the platform. It was just as the train was starting again that I observed in big letters —BURY LYNWOOD.

With a sudden shout I scrambled out of the carriage and looked about for my friend Mulaney, who had invited me down for the Christmas vacation. He wasn't there. I was surprised. I took my bag to the waiting-room and made inquiries of the porter.

"For the Hall, sir?" he exclaimed. "The trap's 'ere. Colonel Mulaney 'as been waiting for twenty minutes. Hoy—there!"

The porter pointed out the little wicket-gate down the street. A dog-cart was spanking away. On the back was perched the youth with the initials B.K.M.

"That's it, sir!" And the porter dashed into the road, waving. He just about rattled his hand off, but the American made no sign.

"'Elp, but 'e's a mean 'ound!" yelled the

porter. "No, sir, I'm afeard there ain't no other conveyance. Yes, sir, I'm afeard you'll 'ave to leg it, sir. Eh? Parding. I'm a bit dull o' the 'earing. Ah—two miles! Yes, sir. Keep to the left all the way—thank'ee, sir. Yes, sir."

I ground my teeth. The two-mile tramp was not the worst of it. It was the youth yclept B.K.M. Did the "M" stand for Mulaney, I wondered, suddenly, and would this be Frank's brother Bill just home from the States? I had heard about him at school; I knew he was taking a post-grad course over there; and they say people take on local colour quickly. And I—I had gone and cheeked him! A joyous look-out.

Which was exactly like a thing that happened to me last summer. I had knocked a cricket ball into the next garden, and, squinting over, saw a chap strolling about kicking the heads off daisies. On being requested to "chuck us the ball," he balanced himself on one foot, rapped out a baseball term, and the leather sang past my ear three gardens away. Among other things I called him a silly kipper. Two hours after, he was brought in to visit the pater. We were introduced.

"Bertie (that's me)—Dr. Lawhead Bagster, of Paulapolis University, U.S.A.!" As luck would have it, there was not a hole in the floor just handy for me to topple through.

And same here. I had barged, with elbows up, into either Bill or some guest of the Mulaneys. I repeat, it was a jaunty, playful prospect. And, I can tell you, it was with what novelist chappies call "a strange foreboding" that I got my bag from the waiting-room and set out on the two miles of a frosty turnpike to Lynwood Hall.

Lynwood Hall stood among trees. Deep, dark firs massed in the place on every side, so that its old gables peeped out strangely from among shadow. A long, gloomy avenue wound down to the open highway, where, at wrought-iron gates, a small hexagonal lodge stood guard. Here I tugged the bell-clutch.

If I expected the appearance of an old liveried veteran, studded with medals and braced up with gold braid, my hopes careened. My ring was answered by a man in the primal process of shaving. I inquired if this were, by any fluke-hit of destiny, the Mulaneys' place. Immediately I opened my mouth, I saw the futility of questioning him. The man, being encased in soap-lather, could not reply. Nevertheless, underneath the turbulent white chaos, in the region of his mouth, a bubble evolved. It began to float to the surface. I was dazzled by it. I knew it contained, like an envelope, the desired information. It came slowly at first. Then, rising with a rush, it burst—"Yes!"

So far, good. I stated my name and asked for Master Frank.

"Eh?" said Soap-lather, blowing.

"Master Frank!" I repeated.

"No' at hame!" he sputtered, in a broad Scotch accent, shaking his head till the soap splashed from him. It douched me, and transformed him into a sort of foam-flecked fog-horn.

Not at home! This was a set-back. If Frank wasn't at home, then why had he written me a week before asking me to trot along?

"Are you positive?" I insisted.

"Eh?" gargled Soap-lather.

I turned away. Evidently his ears were full of soap. His brain was certainly befogged with it. My blithe "good morn" to him was interrupted.

"Callum!" screamed a female voice from the rear. "'Ow dare you talk to any young gentleman in such a state. Yes, sir," she explained, "Master Frank's away, but they'll tell 'ee about it up at the 'ouse. Straight up the avenue. You can't go wrong. Good morning, sir."

I made my way briskly up the avenue, mentally vowing that if Frank weren't there, back I'd go by the next train.

Before I could edge in a word at the front door, a cheery-looking man-servant bagged my overcoat, and in two shakes I found myself in the dining-room, wondering what was going to happen next. The door suddenly burst open and in plunged a little man with a face like strawberries and cream. The strawberry region spread from skull-cap to thorax, the cream being his moustache, which drooped gracefully on either flank like waterfalls. This was plainly that retired veteran, Colonel Mulaney.

"Here you are!" he cried, rattling my arm out of its socket. "Bertie Walters? Ah, yes, yes!" I was rapidly presented to Mrs. Mulaney. I was asked if I had had a pleasant journey. I was told that I felt hungry. I was hustled to the table. And, before I could edge in a word about backing out, I found myself consuming enormous quantities of grub, the colonel, flourishing a carver, acting as head fireman and stoker.

It was explained to me that Frank and Bill

had motored that morning to Southampton to see a sick cousin off to Australia. Directly the boat left they would scorch back. It was a pity, Mrs. Mulaney said, and it was terribly inhospitable, but she was sure—the colonel, too, was sure: he shouted his assurance, he banged his assurance on the table with the butt-end of the carver—that Bill's friend, who had just come, and I, would entertain each other splendidly until to-morrow. . . .

Then in strolled Bill's friend. It was B.K.M.

"Sorry," he said, backing out; but the colonel jumped to his feet, shouting him back.

"This," he enunciated, "is Bill's friend, Mr. Booker K. McClintock—Mr. Bertie Walters."

"How d' y' d' ?" I said with an effort, my mouth being full.

"Aw-de-daw?" remarked Booker, smoothing a visionary moustache. "Hev you come to get a long last squint at my grip? Or another gape at my pants, perhaps? No? Pastimes do pall, I s'pose."

"Ha!" shouted the colonel, who put this down to friendly Yankee chit-chat. "My dear, they are getting on splendidly already! I told you so! Frank and Bill will be delighted——"

"Excuse me——" I began.

"Delighted!" he shouted. "Scamper along, Bertie, old man——"

I interposed. I made a last effort.

"I think I'd rather go——"

"Certainly. At once!" chirruped the colonel, pirouetting on ahead. "Upstairs to your bunkety-bunk!"

I gave a despairing sigh—I followed the colonel.

"There's a ghost about this place," said the colonel at lunch.

"The White Lady and the Italian Count," explained Mrs. Mulaney. "How do you like the pudding, Mr. McClintock?"

"It don't come up to American flip-jack and molasses," declared Booker. "Wha-a-at's this yarn about a ghost?"

"It's an interesting story," said the colonel. "Thrilling. It's about a murder. Before my day, you understand. There is a superstition—*I* don't believe it, not a word of it—that on every twenty-fifth anniversary, the ghosts of the two perpetrators have appeared in the Long Room."

"On the top flat," explained Mrs. Mulaney, "we have a great old gloomy chamber called the Long Room. At one end a little door leads into the old musicians' gallery of the drawing-room. People say the ghosts are seen passing through this door. A light is seen burning for a moment. Then everything disappears."

"Some of the servants left last time," commented the colonel. "I was in Scotland, then. It was the Christmas of '80—let me see. Yes. At any rate, it is this Christmas that the ghostly gentry are due to appear."

"You'll point out this place afterwards?" requested Booker. "But I bet this kid will be skeered!"

"I draw the line at ghost-hunting," cut in the colonel, quickly. "Decidedly so. They are dangerous things to dabble with. Slippery. No one in the world——"

"We in America," declared Booker, "know a thing about psychic phenomena, and bet your boots you'll get cold feet waiting for a grip of any spook's kimono rope. Rotten stunt. You're better in your bed. But, for all that, I reckon this kid will go goblin-hunting to-night and get skeered. Say, don't come skidding at my door at two a.m. I believe in my eight hours."

I did not deign to reply; and after lunch, strolling into the smoke-room for a mag., I found Booker's Yankee mag. and settled down beside the fire. But I couldn't read.

My mind continually wandered to the ghost story. There was something grey—the ghost colour—sticking to the mantelpiece.

"Pine resin," said I, vacantly, picked it off, and flung it in the fire, where I broodingly watched it hiss and splutter. Presently Booker strolled in. I commenced coining an epigram, and got the length of "'Jolly clever as you Americans are——" when, to my consternation, I saw him feeling round the mantelpiece with his fingers.

"You nigged my gum?" he demanded.

"Your what?" I tried to look unconcerned. "Jolly clever as you Americans are——"

"I stuck it here," he insisted.

"Jolly clever——"

"Just here!" He tapped the spot. Then he looked at the spluttering fire. His face went red.

"Some flap-eared boot-jack!" he choked. "Some flibber-gibbet . . ." His voice tailed off with rage. He looked at me.

I suppose I—well—turned red a bit, you know—and I felt jolly uncomfortable, I can tell you.

Then Booker opened his mouth. He spoke.

I tell you, what he said would have made the most hardened compiler of an American

slang dictionary clap his hands to his ears. I felt as if his voice tossed me up, whirled me in the air, banged me down; curled round my ankles, jerked me from my feet, beat me, ripped me, lanced me, shredded me, till I lay, a limp rag, in the depths of my armchair.

In terms that bit and glittered, he summed me up—from my first blockade of a railway carriage that wasn't mine, to the blatant highway robbery of his personal effects.

Then he stopped for breath.

Realism is all very well, but if I told you of my search for a torture sufficiently stinging, humiliating, and pitiless for my purpose—namely, to swipe Booker in the dust—it would run to the compass of the Human Comedy itself. It was when I was about to abandon the search that, by chance, there jerked to my mind the ghost story, and, lo, I had my idea! It would get Booker bang in the wind at the moment he was least expecting it.

I began preparations at once, and popped outside to strike acquaintance with a stable-boy or anyone who could put me up to the full points of the ghost fable. Rounding a corner, I heard someone raking gravel and carolling in a rusty tenor. It struck me this was Callum, the late soap-latherer. I accosted him. He stopped and cocked his head to one side, which meant he didn't quite take me.

"There's ghosts about here?" I repeated.

He spat on his hands. "Ay, there's a shade or twa," he thoughtfully decided.

"It would be frightfully decent of you, you know, if you would tell me about these ghosts," I said.

Callum spat on his hands. "Weel," he said, chattily—after I had remembered that hands are usually fond of clutching shillings—"Ah'll tell ye. Mon, A'm fond of shades myself. They're gr-r-and things—shades!" He spat on his hands. "Listen! FityOlney, a tenant o' the hall, and his sister Anne, were at each other's throats aboot a man Larose, an Italian count, a refugee. The sister was for hiding him awa' safe, but FityOlney was for shooting him out the door."

"Right," I said. "Plain so far."

"Weel," proceeded Callum, leaning on his rake, "the sister Anne blentered FityOlney's lugs till he caved in. And so the Italian coont was hid in the dovecot tower, above the Long Room. Of course, all the time, the coont was Anne's young man. FityOlney discovered this, and was about to gie information of the Italian's whereabouts, when the coont and Anne murdered him. They hid his body in the dovecot tower where the Italian had hid."

"By Jove!" I said.

Callum leaned forward. He tapped me on the chest with a muddy finger. "And the queer thing is—they died that nicht themselves! Naebody kens how. It's mystery! And to this day, shades of the White Lady and Italian coont gae wandering frae their graves. Mon," he said, looking at the sky, and spitting on his hands with relish, "it'll be a gr-r-rand nicht for shades! See thae black clouds! Mon, it'll be a dar-r-rk nicht, a gr-rand nicht for shades! Their banes will clank ae nicht——"

His remarks were suddenly interrupted by footsteps on the gravel. The whistled accompaniment I recognised as Booker's.

"See here," I said, swiftly to Callum. "I'm going to make an ass of this chap. I'm going to scare his wits out. Tell him about the ghosts! Make his hair rise!"

Callum winked. From a window I watched his arms go like windmills, convincing Booker of the supernatural. And I hoped and longed that the ghost-raising Callum would put the shivers on him.

I asked the colonel to show me the Long Room. He said we would have to wait till Booker returned from the village, and it was getting dark before he put in an appearance. Then we all went upstairs.

The colonel opened a door next to my bedroom. A staircase wound upwards. We mounted single file, and, presently, entered a great high chamber, with beams and intricate rafters along the roof. At one end was a stained-glass window. The whole length of the chamber was littered with the household gods of a day that was dead—broken bronzes, bedsteads, trunks, bureaux of dark-coloured wood, inlaid tables, stools, tapestries, artists' paraphernalia, easels, a crooked lay figure, and dust; fenders, strange-shaped cricket-bats, old books, and dust—especially dust.

"Come while there's yet light," said the colonel, "and I'll show you where the ghosts are said to appear four times a century!"

We threaded our way in the gathering dusk to the other end of the chamber, where a long ladder led upwards. "To the dovecot tower," commented the colonel. "This"—he tapped a door—"leads into the old musicians' gallery of the drawing-room."

"Dooced interestin'," said Booker. "A gardener buck span a long yarn, mixed with tobacco chewings, about this spot. Seems that

My heart seemed to stand still as the faint light revealed two figures, a white one leaning against the ladder, and another carrying something up towards the roof.

a gink FityOlney was lynched and stowed up here?"

Something in Booker's manner made me chuckle. I felt positive he was really worked up and agog. His was merely the sunny smile that hides the troubled heart.

"That's the story," said the colonel. "But I don't believe it. Shall we go now? This place gives me the shivers. I can't laugh in this room. I have never laughed in this room. Hark at the wind! How it's rising! We're going to have a wild night. It's blowing a regular gale! The firs are crying! How soon it is dark. Do you hear the wind up in the tower? Ugh! let's get away from this room. I can't stand it."

Night seemed suddenly to have fallen on us while we waited. And, strangely silent, we stole down in the darkness to cheerful lighted rooms.

We were quiet at dinner. The spell of the Long Room seemed to have fallen upon us. Somehow we returned to the old topic, as if drawn by some outside power.

"I promised you a full account of it," said the colonel, suddenly. "I wish I had told you the whole thing at lunch, and got it off my mind. The thing has been hanging about me like smoke. You know how you sometimes keep humming a tune all day and can't get it out of

your head? Same with that old ghost yarn. Well, the tenant and Anna, his sister——"

"I know all that," said Booker. "After stuffing FityOlney, or what was left of him, in the dovecot tower, how did Larose and Anna die?"

"The two of them," said the colonel, knitting his brows, "had sent a message beforehand for a priest to come and marry them. After putting the murdered body in the tower, they went down into the drawing-room and lit the candles. They descended to the hall to wait for the priest. He came at midnight. He came in a black shroud. He was"—the colonel's voice dropped to a tense whisper, and we leant forward to catch the words—"the Priest of Death! They died as they listened to his knocking! They——"

Then something queer happened.

There was a sudden flash of light in the dining-room—and then darkness. Impenetrable darkness, blinding to the eye. There was a howl from the colonel. Silence. The next moment the butler hustled in with lights, with a story about a new maid who had inadvertently tampered with the meter. The butler tried to make a joke of it. To our ears it sounded strangely hollow. We could not laugh. Presently everyone rose from the table. Their nerves seemed screwed to a tension.

"Hark at the wind!" said the colonel again, shivering. We stood idly and heard it crying in mournful tones round the gables and in the woods, and die away, fluting like doves, in the great chimneys.

"I'm going to bed," said the colonel, suddenly. "I've got a headache. Is that the rain getting worse? Good night all, I'm off!"

And we all followed him. An empty dining-room full of shadows is not a pleasant companion. In my bedroom I sat down. To be honest I did not feel tremendously frisky. But I vowed to myself that I would take Booker down a peg, and I meant to do it. It is an easy matter to make up your mind on a job in good daylight. I found it another matter to carry it out in the midst of darkness, terrifying in its possibilities, with wind and rain lashing the windows and crying dismally in the woods to die away and rise again with mournful howls.

But I did it. I got into my pyjamas, took my candle firmly in my hand, opened the door in the passage, and crept slowly up the stone spiral stair. It seemed an age before I stood in the Long Room. When I set the candle on the floor the steady flame picked up redly the corners of a thousand objects. I knew precisely where to look for what I wanted. Thrown over a bureau was a large white dust-sheet. I donned it. I left the candle with its unwavering flame, and crept down the stair. Making to Booker's door, I tapped softly and went back along the corridor. Nothing happened. I returned and tapped again. That did it. I heard his door opening. I bolted back to the foot of the stone stair and listened. There was a pause, then his feet pattered along the corridor. The footsteps stopped at the stair foot, just three yards from me. It was my plan to get him right to the ghostly atmosphere of the Long Room before I jumped out. I moved up, but immediately I commenced ascending he scooted back. His door shut. I heard his key turning in the lock. He was in a dead funk! I smiled. As I made my way back to the Long Room, I foresaw streams of blatant bombast about the ghost at breakfast.

Now that I had achieved my end, I would have gone straight back to bed, only I remembered I had left the candle burning on the floor of the Long Room. So up these dark stairs I crawled again.

When my hand touched a blank wall I realised I was at the top. But the candle should have been burning, and there was none!

The candle was out! I stood still for a moment, my breath coming heavily.

Then I moved forward with hands outstretched. And at that moment, away in the far darkness of the Long Room, there was a dim queer light that flickered and disappeared.

My heart stood still. I heard the faintest softest rustle. And down the Long Room appeared again a light, the faintest glimmer of a steady grey-green light.

Then a figure appeared—two figures.

One was dark and the other was the palest, purest white. They seemed a great distance off. And I heard a mighty throbbing which I knew was the painful pulsing of my own heart. And the white figure was leaning frailly on the ladder; whilst the other carried something upwards to the roof.

He descended, and they passed silently through the door.

There was a blinding flash from beyond it; I saw the musicians' gallery lit up, and the gilt-and-white drawing-room—even the pictures on the walls.

Then it all went, and darkness filled the Long Room. I knew what I had seen. I had

seen the ghosts of the White Lady and the Italian count. And my teeth clicked.

I can't tell how long I stood with knees knocking and eyes bulging. But I remember finding myself wavering back to my bedroom.

I lit a match and pushed open my door.

And again my teeth chattered, and again I felt a chill pulse of terror.

For, on the floor, with arms upraised, knelt a motionless figure draped in palest, purest white. It was the White Lady.

I fled downstairs. I dashed into the lounge in an alcove beneath the stair where the embers of a fire still glowed. It was all like some ghastly dream.

I held out my chill hands to the frail flames. That dim fire was like a companion.

"What's that?" I gasped suddenly, and listened with bated breath.

It was a dull knock at the front-door—sinister, deep, insistent.

My heart leapt to my throat as I remembered the awful legend. Centuries before, on the spot I now stood, the lovers had waited, and the Priest of Death had knocked.

It sounded in the silent house — deep, portentous, fear-compelling. With trembling knees I crossed the hall, and with fingers that quivered like leaves I shot the bolts and drew into the hall.

Frank flounced in—Frank!

He was wet and cherry-coloured from the rain.

"Hullo, old cock!" he shouted.

My tongue refused to speak.

"Good man!" Frank was crying. "Cheero! Excelsior! What a night! Bill's just coming. Car broke down a mile away. Had to leg it. I say, it's frightfully decent of you waiting up for me. But"—then he stopped short—"by what spooky process did you know we would dash home to-night?"

"Spooky!" I burst out. "That's it. It's all spooky. I have just seen the White Lady and Italian c-c-ount!"

"Hullo!" interrupted Frank's brother Bill, stepping out of the darkness. "I could do with some grub. But what's the splash? Who's this kid? You seem cut up, youngster. Eh, spooks, you say? Has the old prof. come—McClintock, I mean?"

"He's asleep," I informed him.

"Wise man," commented Bill. "But look here, honestly," he tried to contain a smile, "if you've been seeing ghosts——"

"You needn't laugh!" I yelled. "I tell you, I did see them. Ghosts. Nothing less."

"Well, I was going to say, McClintock's the man. I remember a gale in America. McClintock was humming rag-time while the chimneys were crashing through the roof. He'll scatter the cobwebs. Where's he sleeping?"

I took Bill upstairs. He hammered on Booker's door.

"Quit that tattoo," grunted Booker. "That you skeered, kid?"

"It's me—Mulaney," shouted Bill.

"Oh, that you, Mulaney? Got home? Right, I'll tumble out."

And presently Booker appeared in a dressing-gown, blinking and stifling yawns. He gripped Bill's hand.

"How do, Mulaney. Queer time for greetings, eh?"

"Here's something in your line, sir," said Bill, briskly. "This kid's been seeing spooks. It's only now he's beginning to talk without his jaws making music. Spooks!"

"Spooks?" said Booker, interestedly.

The next bedroom door shot open.

"Spooks?" shouted the colonel. "I tell you, something came to my door and tapped twice. At the second time I followed. I saw a dim shape. I—I—I returned to my bedroom to consider what should be done. I—I—I didn't like to waken the household. I tell you, I have had a most anxious time. A most terrible time!"

"But——" I said, and stopped. In a flash I knew that I must have gone, not to Booker's, but to the colonel's door. . . .

"Up you go and I'll follow!" said Bill. "I want some grub first."

"Same here," said Frank, diving downstairs, and the colonel followed them.

"I'll get my little star-fire torch," nodded Booker, diving into his room. "It shows up spooks."

And by the blinding light he flashed ahead we made to the Long Room together.

"Where were these goblins?" he demanded when we stood amid the relics of the high chamber.

"Right here," I told him, taking him to the place. "I could even see the yellow scarf the Italian had on."

"My, this is interestin'!" And he meditatively picked up an old cricket ball. Suddenly his foot shot upwards; a baseball term leapt from his lips; his slippered foot came down with a bang upon the floor, and, at the same instant, the ball swerved like lightning across the Long Room and went thump into an old mattress. He laughed.

"Like old Lawhead Bagster!" I ejaculated, forgetting for a moment the ghosts.

Booker K. McClintock wheeled round.

"Did you say Lawhead Bagster?"

"Yes," I nodded. "He once chucked my cricket ball like that three gardens away, and I called him a silly kipper."

"So he is," said Booker, fervently.

"You—you know him?"

"He's my assistant!"

"But," I stammered, "he's a lecturer in Paulapolis University."

"So'm I," said Booker, calmly cocking his eye at me. He lit a cigarette. "Psychology. Monday, Wednesday, Friday. Want a course?"

Had I been cogged shying eggs at the Head on Speech Day I couldn't have felt rummier. There was a helpless silence in the Long Room. It was broken by the sound of footsteps. Bill appeared. He wore a long face.

"I'm awfully sorry, sir," he said, without even looking at me, "when I spoke to my people just now—the mater's wakened, too—they were awfully cut up—I had omitted to tell them you were a professor—they thought you were just a——"

"A rollicking, red-type, fifth edition of a Kentucky coon-song!" bellowed the other. "And so I am! Tell 'em to dry their tears, and get the Christmas breakfast ready."

Bill grinned respectfully and descended. As soon as his footsteps died away:—

"Say, kid."

"Yes, sir."

The corners of his mouth twitching, the American looked over his shoulder. Following his gaze I saw, thrown over a stool in the corner, a pile of dark garments, a yellow scarf, and the old lay-figure tricked up in a white dust-sheet.

"My own little stunt," he said. "My own little back-answer. I plus that dummy were your spooks. Then I propped it in your bedroom. Quick work." He chuckled as he watched my face.

Then he held out his hand.

"Shake!" he said. "But I guess there's grub goin' downstairs. Was that a cork poppin'? Then let's jog!"

Competition for January

"WORDS WANTED"

First Prize in each Class: Goods to the Value of Half a Guinea
Second Prize in each Class: A Book by a Captain Author

WORDS WANTED

BELOW we print a paragraph from which a number of words have been omitted. How many of the missing words can you supply? Wherever a word has been left out a row of dots appears, so that there are eighteen missing words altogether. When you have decided what they are write them down, in correct order, beneath each other, and send them to us, taking care to observe the rules and conditions. Here is the paragraph:—

Early the next . . . . . Dick made his . . . . . to Tarmouth and . . . . . out the old fisherman. His errand . . . . . fruitless, however, for old Ben had . . . . . no sign of a hatless . . . . . near the river overnight. Disappointed, Dick . . . . . that he had better . . . . . the letter which he . . . . . sure would come . . . . . from his brother, and . . . . . his course of action in . . . . . with his brother's . . . . . in London. The expected . . . . . arrived . . . . . evening, and to Dick's . . . . . and delight, instructed him to catch an . . . . . train . . . . . day for London.

RULES AND CONDITIONS

1. The name, address, and age of the competitor must be written above his attempt.

2. Competitors will be divided into two classes comprising those sixteen years of age and over, and those under sixteen respectively.

3. Entries must be received not later than Wednesday, January 20th, 1915, addressed to the Competition Editor, THE CAPTAIN, 8, Southampton Street, Strand, London, W.C., the words "Words Wanted" being written in the top left-hand corner of the envelope.

4. In the event of a tie, neatness and age may be taken into consideration, or the value of the prizes divided, at the Editor's discretion.

5. Winners of the first prize may select goods to the value of half a guinea from any firm advertising in THE CAPTAIN.

6. The Editor's decision must be accepted as final.

TWENTY CONSOLATION PRIZES WILL ALSO BE AWARDED

Books for Holiday Reading

By A "CAPTAIN" REVIEWER

A BOOK by Harry Collingwood is one of the events of the year, and his new yarn, **"A Chinese Command,"** which Messrs. Blackie have just issued at 5*s*., is one of the best we have ever had from him. It tells how a young English naval lieutenant, named Murray Frobisher, at the outset of his career loses by a collision the torpedo-boat of which he is in command. He is promptly cashiered, and for some months wanders vainly round in search of employment. At last he secures the berth of chief officer of the s.s. *Quernmore*, which is engaged in the business of carrying arms and ammunition to the Korean insurgents. Frobisher's attempt to transport the cargo inland results in his being taken prisoner by the Korean troops. Things go very hardly with our hero indeed until he is rescued by the Chinese admiral, who gives him employment in the Chinese navy. In this service Frobisher performs daring exploits against Chinese pirates, and his fame as a bold fighting seaman is so firmly established that eventually he is reinstated in the British Navy with the rank of captain. It is a rousing story, and there are some fine coloured illustrations by Mr. Archibald Webb.

Percy F. Westerman provides us with more naval sensations in his tale, **"The Sea-Girt Fortress"** (Blackie, 3*s*. 6*d*.); and now that Heligoland is playing so prominent a part in the great war this book should have a particularly wide sale. The reader will learn what a tremendous stronghold the Germans have made of Heligoland, where the two heroes of the story are imprisoned as spies. The end of the tale sees the smash-up of Heligoland, and we all hope that this incident in Mr. Westerman's fiction will soon be turned into hard fact.

The Pilgrim Press publish a very interesting book of school tales at 3*s*. 6*d*., by W. E. Cule. It is called **"Roxborough School,"** which is not a very exciting title, and scarcely does justice to the yarns of which the book consists. "The Trench in the Garden" is one of the longest and best in the collection, but in the fourteen others there is many a good one. The same firm also publish the annual volume of *Young England*, a contemporary magazine for which THE CAPTAIN has always had considerable respect, because its contents are always healthy and wholesome, and because it endeavours to uphold the best traditions of boys' literature. It appeals to boys somewhat younger, perhaps, than the majority of our readers, but it contains sound reading matter and many illustrations, and altogether is a solid five shillingsworth.

"Treasures of the Earth" (Blackie, 3*s*. 6*d*.) is a most interesting book on minerals of all kinds, and the author, Mr. Cyril Hall, describes very clearly their wonders. The chapters on "King Coal," gold, silver, and precious stones are most informative. **"Rob Wylie of Jordan's"** (Blackie, 3*s*. 6*d*.) is a school story illustrated by our old friend T. M. R. Whitwell, and **"The Mastery of the Air"** (2*s*. 6*d*.) tells the complete story of man's ceaseless efforts to build a ship that will fly.

Lieutenant-Commander Taprell Dorling, R.N., has exciting adventures to relate in **"The Boy Castaways"** (Blackie, 5*s*.). The hero, Billy Martin, has a rough time aboard the barque *Saracen*. Captain Wedderburn is down on him, and his son Roger takes a mean advantage of his position to persecute poor Billy. But the barque is wrecked, and when the two boys are cast upon an island they become fast friends. Indeed, after a Robinson Crusoe existence, they have to make common cause

against Chinese pirates who land on the island. Fortunately for the boys they find a staunch ally in Ah Sing, the Chinaman. The adventures of this trio—including a treasure hunt and fierce fights with their foes—are most graphically described, and this new writer for boys succeeds in making Endeavour Island—of which a sketch map is given—a very real place indeed.

Twenty years or so ago many people believed that the long and rapid succession of inventions and scientific discoveries which the marvellous nineteenth century brought forth had come to an end. To-day the products in the same field of human enterprise during the present century seem to us still more remarkable, and a perusal of such a book as **"Discoveries and Inventions of the Twentieth Century"** (Routledge, 7*s.* 6*d.* net), written by Edward Cressy as a sequel to the similar well-known work by Robert Routledge, B.Sc., dealing with the nineteenth century, deepens rather than diminishes that impression. The range of the book is wide, covering among other subjects the most recent developments in the use of water-power, steam, petrol, gas, electricity, and radium, with interesting chapters also on railways, electric traction, aeronautics, wireless telegraphy, soil and crops, warships and their weapons, the making of ice, factory and workshop economy, the electric furnace, some new applications of photography, and many other subjects. The book is written in a manner quite easily comprehensible by the non-technical reader, and the illustrations, which number nearly three hundred, are very helpful.

Discovery of a different kind is the keynote of **"The Voyages of Captain Scott"** (Smith, Elder & Co., 6*s.* net), retold by Charles Turley from "The Voyage of the 'Discovery'" and "Scott's Last Expedition," with an introduction by Sir J. M. Barrie, who deals most charmingly with the boyhood of the gallant explorer. Near the garden of the Scotts' Devonshire home ran a leat—the local name for a running stream—and many were the romantic adventures that had their scene on and about this leat.

"An easy way of getting to the leat at the foot of the fields was to walk there, but by the time he was eight Scott scorned easy ways. He invented parents who sternly forbade all approach to this dangerous waterway; he turned them into enemies of his country and of himself (he was now an admiral), and led parties of gallant tars to the stream by ways hitherto unthought of. At the foot of the avenue was an oak tree which hung over the road, and thus by dropping from this tree you got into open country. The tree was (at this time) of an enormous size, with sufficient room to conceal a navy, and the navy consisted mainly of the sisters and the young brother. All had to be ready at any moment to leap from the tree and join issue with the enemy on the leat. In the fields there was also a mighty ocean, called by dull grown-ups "the pond," and here Scott's battleship lay moored. It seems for some time to have been an English vessel; but by and by he was impelled, as all boys are, to blow something up, and he could think of nothing more splendid for his purpose than the battleship. Thus did it become promptly a ship of the enemy doing serious damage to the trade of those parts, and the valiant Con took to walking about with lips pursed, brows frowning as he cogitated how to remove the Terror of Devon."

The boyish make-believes of J. M. Barrie's own "Sentimental Tommy" are brought to one's mind by these intimate pieces of biography, and we are surely reminded of our own boyhood too, which few of us can have found lacking in similar opportunities to display our resource and appease our appetite for adventure. Scott, however, was destined to find a wider outlet for his adventurous aspirations, and the stirring chapters of the book before us, told to a great extent in the hero's own words, give us a vivid notion of the hardships, the perils, the thrill, and the romance of the life he led and sacrificed.

Among the manuals issued for the benefit of the new army—probably the most intelligent army ever mobilised—may be mentioned two very neat and informative shilling handbooks published by John Murray, entitled respectively, **"Field Entrenchments"** and **"Ceremonial."** The former includes chapters on hasty fire cover, deliberate entrenchment, shelters and cover trenches, concealment, communications and obstruction, while the latter covers among other subjects sanitation, billets, camps and bivouacs, camp organisation, rations and cooking, and guard duties. Both volumes are well illustrated and based upon official manuals. A useful handbook on **"Rifle Training for War,"** by Ernest H. Robinson, has been issued at a shilling by Messrs. Cassell & Co., Ltd.

The biggest war book we have seen up to the present is **"Our Soldiers and Sailors"** (Ward, Lock & Co., 6*s.* net). The two parts of this volume, dealing respectively with the Army and the Navy, comprise together over five hundred pages, and they are illustrated by numerous photographs. Articles are included on "What a Modern Battle is Like," "A Soldier's Day," "Reviews and Manœuvres," "Feeding an Army," "The Making of a Sailor," "Building a Big Ship," "Sailing Ships and their Rigs," "Naval Uniforms," and many other subjects, and there are twenty-two coloured illustrations.

Some nice little stories for young readers are contained in **"My Own Stories"** (A. & C. Black, 3*s.* 6*d.*), by Alcott Ruth Norman, which has several coloured illustrations and

many little sketches. **"The Wonder Book"** (Ward, Lock & Co., 5*s*.), a very popular annual for the young folk, is as bright as ever, containing contributions by May Wynne, Jessie Pope, Felix Leigh, Frank M. Williamson, Arthur Cooke, and many other authors and artists. The illustrations are numerous, and can be relied upon to delight many little ones too young to read the letterpress.

Two new books for boys, each by an author deservedly popular in his own sphere, have just been produced by Messrs. W. and R. Chambers. **"Teddy Lester's Schooldays"** will receive a hearty welcome from the readers who delighted in the same hero's earlier adventures, as related by Mr. John Finnemore in "Teddy Lester's Chums," for many of the characters of the former book reappear, including Ito Nagao, the Jap, and Jimmy West (otherwise called the Bat). If the plot presents no striking novelties, the story is full of incident on the football field and elsewhere, and will hold the attention of most boys from the first page to the last. The second book is **"Edric the Outlaw,"** wherein Escott Lynn departs considerably from the scenes and times of "A Hero of the Mutiny" and "Blair of Balaclava," to give us a tale of the youth of Egbert, the grandfather of Alfred the Great. The theme will be fresh to most readers, and the author has been able to write a very enthralling tale without departing to any great extent from historical records, for the early years of Egbert were remarkably full of adventure even for those stirring times. Both books are well printed and bound, published at 5*s*., and illustrated by six coloured drawings.

War or no war, many young people will now be looking forward to their copy of **"Louis Wain's Annual"** (John F. Shaw, 1*s*. net), which this year contains stories and verses by such well-known writers as John Strange Winter, W. Pett Ridge, Barry Pain, and C. N. and A. M. Williamson, among others. Above all, from the point of view of the juvenile reader at least, there are Mr. Wain's wonderful drawings of cats on every page—laughing cats, solemn cats, angry cats, demure cats, pussies at work and at play; and, by way of a change, there are one or two sketches of dogs and of chickens.

Thirty stirring adventure tales, several of which made their original appearance in the pages of THE CAPTAIN, have been collected and bound together in a well-printed volume entitled **"Herbert Strang's Book of Adventure Stories"** (Henry Frowde, Hodder & Stoughton, 5*s*.). Himself one of the most popular of living writers for boys, Mr. Strang is an excellent judge of what the present-day boy likes in the way of recreative reading, and the stories in this volume which he has edited, most of them written by men who have travelled extensively and experienced such adventures as those of which they tell, is sure to find a permanent place on many bookshelves. The book is well illustrated, and includes tales by John Mackie, Stacey Blake, Major A. H. P. Harrisson, G.E.Whalley, Captain E. J. Wolseley, Dr. T. A. Stoddard, and others.

Another volume of selections in which CAPTAIN stories figure prominently is **"Black's Boys' Book"** (A. & C. Black, 3*s*. 6*d*.), which opens with a "Foozle" story by Gunby Hadath, and contains many well-chosen episodes from some of the best works of R. S. Warren Bell, P. G. Wodehouse, John Finnemore, and other authors, besides a number of articles from various books on natural history, travel, railways, and so forth. The book is illustrated by sixteen drawings in colour.

The following books, several of which deserve longer notice had we space to give it, have also been received: **"Cicely's Highwayman,"** a story of the days of Queen Anne, by Dorothea Moore, whose "Brave Little Royalist" gave great pleasure to many girl readers last year (Nisbet, 5*s*.); **"The Conquerors of Mexico,"** retold from Prescott's well-known work by Henry Gilbert (G. G. Harrap & Co., 3*s*. 6*d*. net); **"The White Caravan,"** by W. E. Cule (Nisbet, 3*s*. 6*d*.); **"Boy Trappers in the Rockies,"** by J. W. Schultz (G. G. Harrap & Co., 3*s*. 6*d*.); **"On Trail and Rapid by Dog-Sled and Canoe,"** the story of Bishop Bombas's life amongst the Red Indians and Eskimo, by the Rev. H. A. Cody, M.A.; **"Missionary Crusaders,"** by Claud Field; **"Judson, the Hero of Burma,"** by Jesse Page; **"A Hero of the Afghan Frontier,"** the life story of Dr. Pennell, by Alice M. Pennell, M.B., B.Sc. (Seeley, Service & Co., 2*s*. 6*d*. each); **"The Adventures of Don Lavington,"** by G. Manville Fenn, **"A Lion of Wessex,"** by Tom Bevan, **"The Crystal Hunters,"** by G. Manville Fenn, **"First in the Field,"** by G. Manville Fenn, **"Bob Harlow's Adventures,"** by G. Manville Fenn, **"In Honour's Cause,"** by G. Manville Fenn, **"Steve Young,"** by G. Manville Fenn (S. W. Partridge & Co., 2*s*. each).

SOUTHAMPTON STREET, STRAND, LONDON

A Word to William the Conquered. "Come and spend Christmas with us; we'll make it warm for you!" wrote a CAPTAIN reader to the Kaiser, but so far no reply to the invitation has been received from the Lunatic at Large. Perhaps the message never reached him, for the little make-believe War Lord must be a difficult chap to find now, since in his efforts to boss the German Army in all its sections he is always skipping in his Red Cross Train from Belgium to Alsace, and from Alsace to East Prussia, and back again to the Western area of war, strewing iron crosses all the way, as I understand; and, if what the newspapers state to be true, for ever throwing off his chest such three-ha'-penny histrionics as: "Ypres, Ypres, Hooray!" "Calais at all Costs!" "London in Ashes!" and so on. Kaiser Wilhelm the Weak has no sense of the dignity of war; he has an amazingly exaggerated sense of his own importance and powers. He conceived this cruel conflict as a mighty pageant in which he should play the principal part, nay, all the principal parts. He expected to enter Paris in all pomp; he saw himself dictating the destinies of Western Europe ere with all the regalia of victory he sauntered back to stay the Russian advance with his outstretched hand. Paris impudently spoilt his plans; the Russians laughed at the Imperial Policeman's proclamation, and there was "no thoroughfare" through Galicia. East and West his plans of campaign failed; and the world saw that the Chief of all the Bosches was making a hopeless bosh of it. All the world saw it but William the Conquered; *he* went back in a bright new uniform to Flanders with a proclamation announcing the annexation of Belgium in his pocket. He saw himself standing in the centre of Ypres, proudly uttering the phrases that added King Albert's land to the Empire of the Huns; he heard the "Hochs!" of his well-trained soldiers; possibly he thought he heard the faint applause of the grateful Flemish themselves. At any rate it would have made a very pretty pageant, and the Kaiser was well pleased with himself — until he arrived at the German headquarters. For then he

Topical.

Aide-de-Camp to Sir John French—Second-Lieutenant H.R.H. the Prince of Wales.

learnt that Ypres was in the hands of the Allies, and another piece of paper had to be torn up.

The Kaiser is a spectacular tyrant; to gratify his vanity the world is plunged into war; miseries indescribable are charged to his personal account; amidst all the horrors and uncertainties of the terrible conflict one thing only is certain and comforting to remember. That one certain thing is that when Britain and Russia and France dictate the terms of peace the sickest man in all creation will be William the Shamed, the man who murdered his own nation to win a fleeting glory for himself, to justify the colossal "War Lord" bluff that had reigned for a score of years. Wilhelm Hohenzollern, a new year dawns; you can yet save the fragments of your honour by making a resolution to behave in the future like a king and a gentleman, or, at least, to try. If you could only succeed in seeing yourself as you are, and not as you think you'd like to be, you would at once lay down your arms and obtain for your country that mercy which is lessening as each day passes in battle. It is a resolution well worth considering, Wilhelm, for I can assure you there are hundreds and hundreds of young British fellows who have made a resolution of their own—and they will keep it. The "contemptible little Army" is getting bigger every day; it is a mighty long way from being wiped out, as you so blithely ordered it to be. You have been strong in talk, William of Prussia, but, somehow, the Allies have been *doing* the things, haven't they?

Sergeant Gunby Hadath is one of the few men who really want to see the Germans land in England. And this is by no means, mark you, because the genial creator of "Foozle" has pro-Teuton tendencies—a more loyal heart than Gunby's never beat. No, he has joined a home-defence corps (and won promotion therein) and the summit of his ambition is to have a go at the Germans himself. This, he regrets, can never happen unless some raiding party sets foot on our coast, in which event Hadath is praying that he may be there. I must say that I sincerely hope my enthusiastic contributor will have no chance of seeing active service on our shores, though I have not the slightest doubt that were an incursion to take place the invaders would have a particularly warm reception. The Germans, I think, would be prepared to make a pretty heavy sacrifice even to boast of the "glory" of having set hostile foot in England, but the last conceivable thing in the world is that their efforts should be crowned with the slightest success.

Topical.

H.M.S. *Mersey*, one of the monitors that shelled the German trenches in Belgium.

The last drawings that John Cameron made for THE CAPTAIN before he enlisted in the London Scottish were the two that appear in this number, illustrating "The Queen's Ring." I have just heard that he is now in hospital in Yorkshire, having been

While returning from a council of war the German Emperor was observed by air scouts of the Allies, who "fired a salute" with a number of bombs. The Kaiser escaped harm, but some Prussian cavalry close by did not fare so well.

severely wounded in the head during the famous charge the 1st Battalion of the London Scottish made at Ypres. All Captainites, I am sure, will join with me in wishing him a speedy and complete recovery.

Strolling the other afternoon through Lincoln's Inn Fields, I espied Lieutenant P. F. Warner, our old Athletic Editor, putting a squad of recruits through their elementary rifle drill. Lucky the recruit who has "Plum" for an instructor! A more patient guide and companion in their difficulties could not be imagined. For half an hour or more I stood, my chin close to the sharp iron palings, watching the famous cricketer advise and reiterate his instructions time and time again. A perfect coach is England's aforetime captain, and one who is doing splendid work for Old England in this her time of need.

Answers to Correspondents

MODELS

W. Dickson (Scotland).—The hauling power of an average No. 1 gauge electric model locomotive is about 15lbs. to 20lbs.; but the amount of electricity (*i.e.*, the amperage) used will depend on the efficiency of the motor. Most electric models are horribly inefficient. Mr. René Bull's model No. 0 gauge electric locomotive will pull 10lbs. to 12lbs. with ease, but the motor is beautifully made. A gradient of 1 in thirty is not too steep for an electrically driven locomotive. See Greenly's "Model Electric Locomotive Construction," price 1s. net.

GENERAL

Anna Marie Lussigny (Paris) writes me an interesting letter in excellent English, in which she tells me that she has "eight uncles at the front, and such a lot of cousins and friends!" And my correspondent wishes she were a boy herself, so that she could go with them. The Union Jack, Mlle Lussigny, combines the flags of England, Scotland, and Ireland. The broad red cross is the cross of St. George of England, the red diagonal cross is that of St. Patrick of Ireland, and the white diagonal cross, on a blue ground, is the cross of St. Andrew of Scotland.

Entally Inquirer.—Thanks for your letter and photograph. If you look in your later numbers of THE CAPTAIN, you will find that our Singapore reader's criticism of R. M. Ballantyne has already been dealt with, and Humboldt's description of the cow-tree quoted.

H. G. B.—Not a bad little poem, but am sorry we cannot find room for it in our pages.

L. Johnson.—Thanks for the photograph. We have several similar ones in hand, however, for which we have not been able to find room.

Waterloo.—The British casualties at Waterloo were about fifteen thousand, the Prussian seven thousand, the French between thirty and thirty-five thousand.

Artillery.—Our article on "Guns of To-day and Yesterday" appeared in our number for last January. We shall publish another article on guns in an early number.

Acknowledgments and thanks are also due to **J. Taylor, C. D. Ardingley, "Jack," J. B.** (Barnstaple), **"Terrier"** (Catford), **"Susan,"** and **F. A. F.** (Swanage).

THE OLD FAG

PREFECTS, ST. PAUL'S SCHOOL, 1914

Back Row: W. H. Levi, A. M. Broad, W. H. Shoobert, G. M. Baker, M. L. Hayne, G. H. Gadsden, C. D. Field.
Front Row: A. J. Pearson, H. M. Last, D. O. Barnett. The High Master. L. J. Barnes, C. H. Skeet, J. R. Willis.

IN WILHELMSHAVEN OF REST

Specially drawn] [*by Alfred Leete.*

"I wonder what I *look* like? Master said I was a *Drake*, but I don't feel a bit like one!"

"Anyone care for a lift?" asked the airman, only half seriously. To his surprise a voice answered, "If you don't mind, sir," and for the first time he noticed Toby.

SPOILING A BATTLE

Another Tale about Toby Trotter, of Kitchener's Army

By R. S. WARREN BELL Illustrated by T. M. R. Whitwell

I

THREE men were walking along a road. Passing as it did over undulating country, scantily wooded and watered, it looked not unlike a road in Wiltshire or Berkshire; but, as a matter of fact, it was a French road, and the three men were soldiers who had lost their regiments.

Leaden skies frowned upon a sodden countryside. The hedges drooped sadly after their flogging by the equinoctial winds and rains. The grey-white road was greasy. The atmospheric conditions, indeed, were the reverse to cheerful; yet, in spite of it all, the middle-sized man of the trio was raising a clear tenor voice and pronounced Cockney accent in one of the ballads beloved of Tommy Atkins:—

'Ullo, 'ullo, who's your lidy friend,
Who's the little girlie by yer side?
I see you with a little girlie true,
Ha! ha! ha! I *am* surprised at you——

"Oh, haud yer noise!" growled the tallest of the party, who wore a Scotsman's bonnet. "Ye never ken whaur yon *Boches* are hidin'."

"If I don't sing I'll cry, mate," replied the middle-sized man. "Oh, don't I wish I was back in Putney! I'd be takin' *my* 'lidy friend' to the 'Ippo to-night."

And he concluded the refrain of his song in a low, melancholy whistle.

"I didna mean to mak' ye downhairted," said the Scotsman, apologetically, "but ye ken there's plenty of these Germans lost their regiments besides we, and it's a question of wha fires first when we sight ane anither."

"Sat'd'y, it is," murmured the Cockney, voicing his thoughts rather than talking to the others. "I'd have gone over to the Chelsea match this afternoon, and in the evenin' I'd 'ave gone to the Putney 'Ippodrome."

"Stop yer mautherin'," protested the Scotsman. "It's no guid hankerin' for whoam. Ye've bit off a war, mon, and ye've got to go through wi' it. Why," he went on, his tone rising with anger, "this laddie here, for all his bad feeties, haunt said a word agen anything. Ye're a game chick, laddie!" concluded the Scot, bestowing a glance of approval on the small figure of Private Toby Trotter. "An' I haup ye win through this cawmpaign a'reet, I do, for ye're the proper stuff an' no mistak'——"

But at that moment, as if to belie the eulogy, Toby Trotter sat down. Sat down there in his tracks, so suddenly that the Cockney went swinging on without noticing what he had done.

For Toby was dead-beat, and his feet were all to bits. He had got his wish, and been enrolled a member of a regiment going to the front—the 2nd Eastfolkshires. In no war that ever was did men find themselves transferred so quickly from the peace of home to the theatre of hostilities, as in this. Within six weeks of his joining the 2nd Eastfolks, Toby was in a transport; within seven weeks he was in the trenches with the shells shrieking about his ears; and within seven weeks and three days he was a waif and stray, having lost his regiment in the course of a hurried retirement. The fighting area looks a small place on the map, but it is a mighty big country to tramp when you are footsore and weary, hungry and thirsty, and have not the faintest idea of your whereabouts, and that was the present plight of Toby Trotter and the companions in distress with whom he had thrown in his lot.

"Can't go a step farther," he groaned.

His rifle slipped from his limp grasp and he began to unlace his boots. It was true enough what the sergeant had said. Since his meeting with them he had kept step for step with these two older and stronger men without a murmur, though all the time he seemed to be lifting leaden weights from the ground, and weights that had burnt and ached horribly. And now he was done! He could not cover another yard, and get rid of these boots he must.

The merest glimmer of triumph lit up the

Cockney's eye when he at length observed Toby's plight. The sergeant grunted disconsolately.

"If ye tak' your boots off, laddie, ye'll never get 'em on again."

"I just can't bear them on," said Toby, hiding his anguish with difficulty.

"Then it's a pretty how d'ye do," grumbled the sergeant. "How we're to get onywheres the noo I dinna ken. We'll juist hae to carry ye, I reckon. North Surreys," he added, turning to the Cockney vocalist, "bring yer gun, and we'll rig up an ambulance."

The two rifles were laid side by side, and with belts and scarves a makeshift ambulance was manufactured. Toby, having got his boots off, crawled on to it; the sergeant seized the butts, Private Jenkins the barrels, and they set off again.

"Lucky ye're a licht weight," muttered the Scotsman; "but even as it is we won't get along very fast, and if any of them *Boches* come on us we're an easy capture."

"*Are* we downhearted?" demanded Private Jenkins, briskly, as he trudged sturdily through the churned-up chalk.

No one answered, and so Private Jenkins, having no breath now for singing or whistling, relapsed into silence. At the end of half a mile they unceremoniously laid Toby down in the grey-white mud while they took a breather; then they resumed their march. And so, marching and halting, they struggled along until at last the roofs of a hamlet hove into view.

"'Ome, sweet 'ome!" observed the unquenchable Jenkins.

"I hae me doots," rejoined McPherson. "Them *Boches* don't leave much sweetness behind of 'em."

And so it proved, for they were greeted with the sight of blackened roofs and tottering walls, and not a living soul was visible.

"Seems like comin' to the end of everythink, don't it?" asked Private Jenkins.

"Hoots!" suddenly exclaimed Sergeant McPherson, who had glanced round. "There's one o' them birdies! And she's winged—or wad she be comin' to airth?"

The other two, following his glance, saw that an aeroplane was swooping down in their direction. They knew not whether she was English, French, or a Taube. But as she came to ground in the field on their right, an unmistakably English voice was heard using unmistakable English expressions.

The sergeant and Jenkins scrambled over the hedge. The soldiers noticed that the airman, as he alighted, held a revolver in his hand. He glanced at them suspiciously, for a British uniform was, as he knew, not the invariable covering of a "friend." But Sergeant McPherson's nationality was undisguisable.

"Hello! Where have you fellows sprung from?" he sang out.

"Lost our regiments, sir," replied the Scotsman. "Mine's the 2nd Forfars, this mon is from the North Surreys, and we're carrying a lad of the 2nd Eastfolkshire."

"Well, I think if you leave the road, and strike straight across country," said Flight-Lieutenant Grosvenor, "you ought to tumble across the base in about ten or fifteen miles. I saw some smoke about four miles away, and that's the railway, and when you strike that you follow it. If you can board a train, all the better."

"We're obliged to you, sir," said the sergeant. "Hope nothing's wrong with the wee birdie machine, sir?" he added.

"Well, you don't imagine I came down to pick beetroot tops!" replied Flight-Lieutenant Grosvenor, in his clear young voice. "I've just flown her up from the coast, and she's been in trouble all the way. My third machine, too."

With a laugh he shed his gauntlets and began to tinker the engine. The Scotsman and Jenkins forgot their woes in watching him, for to them, as to most people, a flying-machine was still a wonderful and eerie creation.

Meanwhile Toby, tired of reclining on a wet road between two rifles, had crawled up to the hedge and wormed his way through a gap. Approaching gingerly on hands and knees, he completed a "gate" of three.

"There, I think it's all right now," said the lieutenant at length, as he drew himself erect. "Anyone care for a lift?"

But he made the remark only half seriously as he climbed into his seat, and was therefore considerably surprised when a voice answered: "If you wouldn't mind, sir."

He stared at the wayfarers, and now for the first time noticed the diminutive figure of Toby Trotter, kneeling by the sergeant's side.

"*You*, eh? But you're the sick man, aren't you?"

"Only foot trouble, sir."

"All right," said Flight-Lieutenant Grosvenor, cheerfully. "Hop in."

Toby could hardly believe his ears. He had never been up in a flying-machine in his life, and here in the middle of the deserted French

countryside, coming to him when his feet were raw and he was dead-beat, was an invitation to travel the rest of his weary journey by the quickest method known to mankind.

"Sorry I can't take you all," said the lieutenant. "Hoist the little fellow in, you two."

"D'ye mean it, laddie?" demanded the Scotsman of Toby.

"Of course I do," said Toby. "I'm only a drag on you two fellows."

"But aren't ye scairt?" asked McPherson. "Yonder isn't a pony-chay, ye ken."

"Hoist him in, will you?" called the lieutenant, sharply.

McPherson bent and lifted Toby in his brawny arms. "Get his gun and his boots," he said to Jenkins. "He may as weel gang complete." And advancing to the machine, he deposited Toby in the observer's seat.

"Strap him in tight," said Flight-Lieutenant Grosvenor. "Oh! here's his baggage! Right! Hold on, youngster. Stand clear, men!"

And as the gaping soldiers stood aside, the machine ran forward for thirty yards or so, and then swept lightly upwards.

Toby Trotter gasped. A few moments ago not even able to stand, now he was sailing through the air like a witch on her enchanted broom! What magic it was! He looked down, and far below descried two small figures. The sergeant and Jenkins were still gazing upwards with their mouths open. He waved his hand. Then, leaning back, he closed his eyes and gave himself up to the pure ecstasy of being whirled through the air at sixty miles an hour.

This was something to tell them about when he wrote home. This was a "lift" if you like!

When he looked down again the earth seemed like an endless chess-board. A wood was a mere spot of black; a river, a silver thread. Somehow he didn't feel at all "scairt." He was inspired with his pilot's easy confidence. The machine was mounting higher, higher, higher. In his pleasure he forgot that his feet were burning and his whole body ached, and shouted with glee.

Then, suddenly, a sharp exclamation from the pilot fell on his ear, and the machine swept off to the right.

"Get down!" shouted the pilot. "Don't you see him?"

Toby, open-mouthed, gazed upon the aerial expanse, and had to confess that he could see nobody. But he had not the bird vision of an airman.

"*Taube!*" shouted Flight-Lieutenant Grosvenor, bearing hard away to the right.

Then Toby saw her. What he had taken to be a bird approaching them was an aeroplane, and she, too, was making a wide circuit. He did not understand the manœuvre then, but he understood afterwards that the Taube was trying to get behind the English machine, and that the English machine was trying to obtain a similar position with regard to the Taube.

Thus, with immense sweeps, like two mammoth birds, they manœuvred.

Then *crack!* and a bullet pierced one of the wings of the English machine.

"Put your head in!" yelled the pilot again.

But the game was now coming into what you might call Toby's street. Fly, manage a flying-machine, he could not; but it would seem there was shooting afoot, for a crack close to his head told him that his pilot was replying. A dead shot ever since he had been able to hold a gun, in this particular act he felt he could bear a hand, and so, unfastening his straps, he picked up his rifle and filled his magazine from his bandolier.

The machines in their circling had covered miles, and glancing down involuntarily Toby perceived below him what appeared to be a line of ants on the warpath. They were so far below that the thought of the distance made him feel giddy, and he closed his eyes. But in that moment the enemy aeroplane had shot upward, and the English machine was going up too. Round they both came, and they were level. Toby could see that there were two men in the Taube, and as he brought his gun to his shoulder a bullet sang by his head. Before he could fire, the enemy 'plane swooped over them. The lieutenant steered wide away and upwards.

"*Now!*" he shrieked.

As Toby took aim the pilot and observer of the enemy machine seemed to disappear. But he could see a gauntletted hand on the wheel, and as the machine flashed past he fired at the hand. The Taube plunged, like a bucking horse, then righted, and dived at a steep angle.

"Don't — let — her — go!" came to Toby through the rush of the wind about his ears, and, leaning over the side of his seat, he sent three shots after the great bird of war. At the first she quivered, at the second she straddled over on her side, at the third she collapsed like a broken, dying creature of feathers, and fell like a stone.

They alighted thirty yards from the wreck of her. Khaki figures came rushing up. They appeared to be in a park. In the distance rose the white walls of a château.

"Where are we?" demanded the airman of one of the figures in khaki.

"These are the general's quarters, sir."

"Headquarters, eh? Struck it right away," he glanced at his shattered rival, "and in more senses than one. Now, young fellow, hop out."

Toby, rifle in one hand, boots in the other, dropped to the ground—and sat where he dropped.

"Better get your feet seen to, lie up for a day or two, and then rejoin your regiment," said the lieutenant. "And for goodness' sake don't get shot, Private Whoever-you-are," he added. "We can do with marksmen."

II

It was two days later. The general was listening to the figures his aide-de-camp had brought.

"Only two hundred and ten of the Mulsters left, you say?"

"The dispatch-rider was shot, sir, and they never got the order to retire."

"Two hundred and ten answered the roll, and about five hundred were captured. That leaves—— What's their strength?"

"Twelve fifty."

The general stifled a groan.

"A desperate bad business, Masters. That's the third of my regiments to be cut up through failing to receive the order to retire."

The general was over fifty and grey. His mouth drooped a little despondently. The young aide-de-camp, who loved and honoured his chief, was quick to force a cheerful note.

"Let's play them at their own game, sir. If they can snipe, so can we. We have the marksmen."

"See what you can do, Masters, will you? The Mulsters are still hanging on—what's left of them—and I propose to bring them back and rest them, and send the 2nd Eastfolks, who are almost intact, to occupy their position. I've told the Eastfolks to be in readiness to shift, and I shall send them final word when I know for a certainty that the French will replace them. So you see there'll be messages both ways which *must not* miscarry. Do what you can to stop that sniping."

"Very good, sir. There's a little chap hanging round here recuperating—an Eastfolk. Grosvenor, of the Flying Corps, had to come down about twenty miles back to tinker his new machine, and picked this chap up off the road, and it was he who dropped that Taube on Wednesday."

"Smart bit of work," returned the general. "Quite the kind of fellow we want, apparently."

"I'll round him up," said the aide-de-camp, going out.

The château just now occupied by the general stood some three hundred yards back from the broad high road that ran like a white ribbon from the coast to Paris. Smooth and easy was its surface, as became a great road in this wide pleasure-ground of the automobile. So far the enemy had not located the general's resting-place, or ere now his shells would have been dropping in the courtyard. As, however, the door of the general's room closed on the aide-de-camp, a peasant, who had been standing beneath the window with a basket of pears on his head, moved out of the shadow thrown by the porch, and crossed the circular sweep of drive towards the park gate. For a peasant he was a big, square-shouldered fellow, and there was no suggestion of years in his gait.

At the park gate a sentry paced to and fro with fixed bayonet. He did not challenge the harmless-looking figure with the pears as the latter approached.

"*Mes poires—voulez-vous?*" said the peasant to the sentry in the rough patois of the neighbourhood. And he held the basket of fruit temptingly before the Briton.

"Wee-wee!" said the latter, helping himself to the biggest pear in the basket, and burying his tobacco-stained teeth in the same. "Tray-bong," he added, with a cordial nod.

The peasant, however, had not intended the pear to be a gift, and, seeing that the English soldier made no move to pay him, searched his vocabulary for the right word.

"Money?" he said. "I not give."

"Sorry, old son," replied the sentry; "but I 'aven't got a copper on me. Remind me of it, will yer?" And he was about to help himself to another pear when the peasant, with an exclamation of anger, snatched the basket away.

"*Schwine!*" he muttered beneath his breath as he went on his road.

He was a peasant all right, and lived on the estate of which this château was the grand house. He had lived here for fifteen years, and people had almost forgotten that when he came here his name was Müller, for by now it was Moule, and his Christian name, too,

had undergone a similar change, "Johann" having become "Jean." For fifteen years he had followed the occupation of a humble tiller of the soil; for fifteen years he had passed a placid, uneventful existence, proving a hard-working man, a good neighbour, and a regular attendant at the little Protestant church. And all that time he had been waiting and preparing for this day—waiting to play the spy when his countrymen came, as come he knew they would some day. Now they were at hand. He had already penetrated their lines, declared himself to be one of them, and offered his services. Quickly they were accepted; and when night fell again upon the village a gossamer wire connected the outhouse of his cottage with a tree in a plantation half a mile distant. The wire did not pass through the air. It stole insidiously along the bank of a stream, and then through a field-drain, and so, in and out, most unobtrusively, to the home of Johann Müller who had become Jean Moule.

This was the spy's little hour. Now he was to find information and telephone it to that tree, whence it would speed in divers ways to where it would be considered and used. While the fighting was here Jean Moule would be all eyes and ears. When the tide of battle had flowed on or back he would return to his simple toil, his little hour lived through and done with.

There were Jean Moules everywhere, but it took a sharper man than the fruit-loving sentry to detect them. In his loose blouse and rough sabots, for all the world like a French peasant looked Jean Moule, and who was to tell the English soldiers that his name had once been Johann Müller? French soldiers, with their keen eyes and ears, might have suspected him, but how was an English "Tommy" to know that Jean Moule's patois was spoken with the slightest German accent?

Reviling the English soldier for a pig and a thief, Jean Moule picked his way down the drive that took you from the château to the high road; but he soon forgot about the English soldier's easy way with other people's property in the thought that his pear-selling had yielded other fruit. For instance, he had discovered the English general's headquarters. Another, he would be on the look-out for dispatch-riders. Their starting would be communicated per field 'phone to that tree at the edge of the plantation, and from that tree warnings to be on the alert would be signalled to the snipers. Furthermore, Jean Moule had been told by the general's soldier-cook to bring up a dozen eggs, some fowls, and a basket of vegetables in the morning. He would make of each a pretext for another journey. Who could tell what he wouldn't pick up? He knew enough English, did Jean Moule, to gather the drift of a conversation in that tongue, for the German boy is an industrious fellow at school, and imbibes lots of things that English boys never dream of learning.

So Jean Moule made his way back to his cottage, and, having eaten his evening meal, went forth to his outhouse to pack up the potatoes required by the English general.

The outhouse corresponding to his in the next garden formed the playroom of a queer, crooked little boy who didn't go to school because they said he was wrong in the head. Avoiding the other children because they teased him, the crooked little boy played by himself. The wild creatures knew him; their ways were familiar paths to his feet.

Jacques Laloupe played alone. He was a white-faced little boy with strange eyes, and a head almost as flat as a plate on the top. To-night, playing in his outhouse, he wondered why Jean Moule was talking to himself so much while he sorted his potatoes. Although Jean Moule frequently made overtures to him, gave him apples and pears, and even centimes, Jacques did not like Jean Moule. For one thing, he was Jacques' mother's landlord—Jean Moule had outdone all his fellow-villagers in thrift, and drove a very keen bargain—and Jacques' mother was a widow and very poor, and consequently often behind with her rent.

After a time Jacques left off listening to the strange mutterings of Jean Moule and turned his attention to something more pleasant. This was a stuffed soldier. Aye, lying there, in his blue coat and red trousers, the soldier looked almost real, so well had Jacques stuffed him. The uniform, when you came to look at it, was very old and ragged. It must have been years since it had clothed the form of Jacques's conscript brother. But the tunic, though so faded, was still of military appearance, and the trousers, though dulled by time and exposure to the weather, were still red. When the war broke out, Jacques, beguiling himself in his lonely way, had sought to bring the realities of war near to him by stuffing the scarecrow, giving it a hideous mask for a face, and providing it with a rough wooden rifle. Jacques used to prop it up in the outhouse and drill it, and soon it became a *brav' camarade* to him, a soldier of the Republic. . . .

So while night closed upon the village of Petite Cappette, Jacques, the queer little boy, adjusted the stuffing of his soldier, and Jean Moule, who was once Johann Müller, muttered to his potatoes.

When Johann Müller had finished his muttering and left the outhouse, Jacques was at liberty to address his hero.

"There, *mon brav'*, you are finished!" he cried. "And you're a beautiful soldier. Now," went on the queer little boy, "you shall see the war. You and I will go up the old tree and see a battle."

A cunning expression on his half-witted face, he cocked up his ears and listened. Johann Müller was within doors. His mother was in the kitchen—he could hear her scolding his little brother and sister. There was a moon, certainly, but he would keep in the shadows. Seizing his soldier, therefore, he crept down the garden and out into the meadow upon which it backed. Hugging the stuffed figure tightly, he stole along the backs of his neighbours' gardens, and at length reached a field bordered by the high road. Following the hedge, he pursued his way breathlessly for a mile, and at length halted at the foot of a giant oak that grew in solitary grandeur out of the hedgerow, and gazed solemnly down upon the broad white road and over the turnip-field beyond.

Suddenly Toby pulled himself together and raised his rifle, for he had heard a sound in the branches above him.

His face still wearing that expression of craft, Jacques crept towards a clump of blackberry bushes growing close to the far-flung roots of the oak tree, and, after another scouting glance round, dived, still holding his soldier tightly, beneath the bushes. There was a little cave under the bushes. Here Jacques deposited his soldier. Reappearing, he climbed the great oak, and was soon lost to view amid its foliage.

The moon shone down from a clear sky upon the broad white road, upon the royal and ancient oak, upon the turnip-field beyond,

and the woodland massed sombrely in the background. From the distance came the roar and cough of great guns, but here all was peace. Yet Jacques, with sure intuition, knew that he had brought his soldier where he would see war. For murder and sudden death were brooding over the white stillness of the road, over the placid field of roots, and amid the whispering trees beyond.

III

Having fed and slept alternately for the whole of two days, and incidentally anointed his feet with some soothing unguent that an R.A.M.C. man had given him, Toby Trotter was himself again, and that was as well, for his present job required a clear eye and cool nerve.

But Toby felt indescribably lonely as, having passed the sentry at the park gates, he went with shouldered rifle along the road to take up the special duty which had been allotted to him for to-night. He would have given anything for a companion, but had not liked to say so. The moonlight gave him a creepy feeling, and he found himself starting a little at shadows. . . . This wouldn't do, and he pulled himself together with an effort. After all, he was being paid a great compliment in being thus singled out to keep guard over the road along which dispatch-riders must pass.

His instructions had been brief and to the point. Along where the road showed so white, and was on one side hedgeless, there lurked danger to dispatch-riders from snipers, who would seek cover in the turnip-fields and woodlands. It was Toby's portion to ensconce himself in some position commanding this exposed patch of road, and endeavour to locate the snipers. Captain Masters, the aide-de-camp who had given him these instructions, had not mentioned that the said snipers would probably endeavour to locate *him*, for that he took to be understood. So when Toby left the road and advanced towards the exposed patch behind the friendly hedge on what he regarded as the "home" side of the road, he looked out carefully for a post of vantage from which he could snipe with a certain amount of security, and it seemed to him that a giant oak-tree, standing all by itself in the most exposed part of the road, ought to yield substantial cover when once one had got the hang of its boughs.

He paused at the foot of the huge trunk and listened. Not a sound came to his ears. Then, slinging his rifle over his back, by the aid of various warts and excrescences on the oak's trunk he climbed up to what one might term the first floor. Here he was effectively screened from view, and as comfortable, in the old oak's arms, as in a saddle-bag chair at home.

He waited. When the other sniper started, he would. Palpably he must have a lead.

Presently through the stillness came the beat of a motor-cycle. Toby got his rifle ready. Nearer came the cycle, thundering over the smooth road. It was coming towards the village. It came into view. The rider was French. It passed on without drawing a shot.

Toby settled himself to wait again. It was colder now, and the rain was beginning to fall, and with the rain came a chill breeze that cut him to the bone. The wind moaned eerily through the dying leaves of the old oak.

At length—hark! Again the rapid beat of a motor-cycle. Nearer—nearer. Now then!

This time it was a khaki figure—plainly a dispatch-bearer from the general. An easy mark, he emerged into the exposed patch of white road. Toby held his breath. Surely . . . .

But not a shot was fired, and the dispatch-bearer rode on in safety. Far away in the distance Toby could hear him flogging along without molestation. No sniping to-night, evidently.

He began to think of other things. He wondered how the Eastfolks were getting on, and whether the sergeant and Jenkins, his friends of the road, had found their regiments yet. He thought of the girls at home—his sister Elsie and her friend Madge sitting over their shirt-making in the snug dining-room. One day, perhaps, he would be able to tell them how he was sent out to snipe a sniper and never found one.

An hour went by. He was slowly being soaked to the bone. A wet pall shrouded the moon, and his surroundings were not so distinct now.

Suddenly every nerve in his body became tense. He had heard the movement of somebody above him. Was it a man—or a wild cat? He must be prepared, and raised his rifle. Perhaps the sniper, biding his time, was in this very tree! The thing was coming down towards him. Toby had his finger on the trigger when through the foliage he perceived a strange face set about with shock hair.

"Who are you?" demanded Toby, swiftly.

"Hist! Not shoot!" was the reply in a

rough kind of French. "You'll spoil the battle!"

"Spoil what?" demanded Toby, forgetting the Frenchman couldn't understand him.

The creature came close to him, putting his hand up as if to ward off the bullet threatening him.

"There's going to be a battle. There they are, all ready!"

He pointed towards the turnip-field and the woods.

"Where?"

"All over the field! They look like turnips! Ha! ha! They are men! I have sharp eyes. I have been watching all the time. I see them move. There are hundreds. Ha! ha! I have brought my *brav' camarade* to see the battle. It will be fine fun!"

"Soldiers? Waiting in the wood?" demanded Toby in the best French he could muster.

"Yes, yes! I can see. I have been watching. Many soldiers. When the battle begin, I bring up my *brav' camarade* to see it. He is in the cave below. Hush! They must not hear us, or we shall spoil it all!"

Toby's heart went cold. The little creature could see with eyes of the wild. This, then, would explain the absence of any sniping. The dispatch-bearers had been allowed to go, bigger game promising. *It was an ambuscade*—and it was lying in wait for the 2nd Eastfolks.

IV

Toby knew that the half-witted, under certain circumstances, are often found to possess greater intuitive powers and more piercing vision than the sane, and he believed that the country boy, with his eyes of the wild, could see, mentally and physically, far more clearly into that wide expanse yonder than himself. What to him were turnip-tops were to the strange boy the heads of Germans. Toby had heard of their trick of lying prone and dressing their helmets with turnip-tops, though as yet he had not witnessed the deception. But the boy could see far into the woods yonder. He could detect the skulking forms of the enemy lying in wait to give battle.

Toby strained his eyes to see as much, but could discern nothing of what Jacques saw. He could not imagine what the queer lad meant by saying he had brought his *brav' camarade* to witness the battle. Some doll or puppet, probably, for there was no other person in the tree or about it.

For the moment, then, he could do naught but sit there in the great tree and await eventualities. He had come there to snipe, but targets were lacking. Other motor-cyclists might be by presently, and then possibly there would be shooting. He hoped so, as it was cold work sitting here.

His fingers gripped hard on his rifle. Actually, one of those turnips had suddenly reached a mighty growth. He had seen a man stand up. The strange boy, then, was right. But of what use to shoot? He would only bring the lot down upon him to silence him. Plainly his task was to sit tight till he detected the tramp of the Eastfolks in the distance. Then a shot would warn them.

"Soon the battle?" inquired the strange boy. "Then I fetch *mon camarade*."

Quick as a thing of the woods and fields he slipped down the massive trunk and disappeared, as it looked, into the ground, to reappear with the stuffed figure. Slinging his "comrade" over his shoulder, he reascended the trunk. Had the moment not been so tense with possibilities, Toby would have smiled at the grotesque shape. But, humouring the boy, he surveyed it gravely.

"Is he not fine?" demanded Jacques. "Is he not *brav'?*"

He passed his hand caressingly over the hideous mask, and deposited the form gently in a fork formed by two great boughs.

"Very soon now, the battle, *hein?*"

Toby nodded, and the boy sat staring at the enemy he could see and Toby could not

So they remained, motionless and watchful, and so, but for that one imprudent uprising that told Toby so much, remained the enemy.

The night stole on, and at last the French boy laid his finger on Toby's arm.

"They come," he said. And Toby, though he could hear nothing, nodded assent.

"Many," added Jacques. "A great many."

And presently Toby's ears told him that this was so. Upon the still air fell a faint, rhythmical sound. It was the sound of many men marching.

So now, at last, it was time to commence business. His magazine was already full. He unfastened the flaps of his bandolier.

"You begin?" asked Jacques.

"Yes. You'd better get down, hadn't you?" replied Toby.

The boy smiled. "We get *up*," he said. And seizing his dummy soldier he went higher up the tree, obviously to find a position whence

his comrade might enjoy a good view of the proceedings. In a few moments he was back.

"Now—he is in his place," he said, and was smiling again, when suddenly his face became rigid and he glanced towards the foot of the tree. Following his glance, Toby saw, looking up at them, a man. He was a peasant, and he held in his hand an old-fashioned gun, which was covering them. It was, in fact, Jean Moule, come to see the English regiment fall into the trap he had prepared for it. And quite by accident he had stumbled upon the two lads in the tree.

"You move," he whispered, hoarsely, "and I shoot."

A strange sound came from the wild boy's throat.

"Are you for them or for us, Jean Moule?" he asked.

"For *them*."

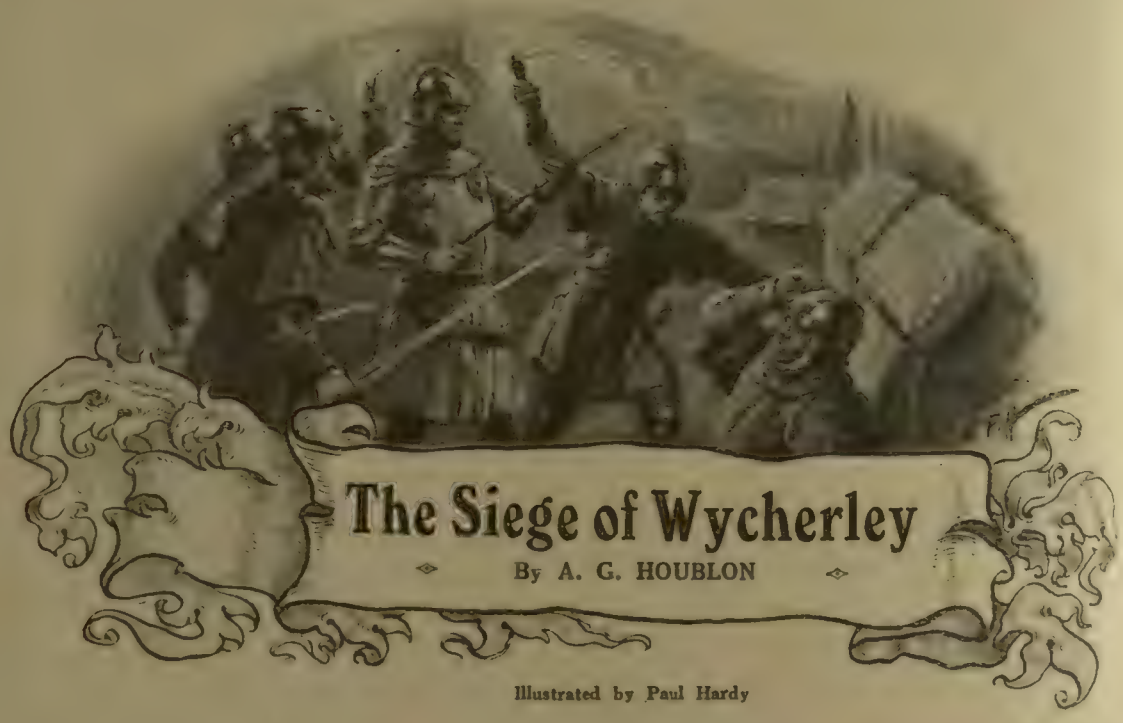
And even as the words were uttered the wild boy dropped bodily upon the upturned face. He was a good weight, was this half-wit, and Jean Moule staggered and fell. Like two panthers they writhed among the blackberry bushes, and then crashed through them.

Toby heard them struggling in the cave below, and then his attention was withdrawn from them by the appearance, at the top of the hill, of a line of men.

So then he fired. He took no aim other than at the turnip-field in a broad sense, but a yell answered the shot. He fired again and again, till his magazine was empty. Then, dropping from the tree, he ran up the hedge, refilling his magazine as he ran, and fired once more, ran on, and fired again, and so, firing, reached the top of the hill, where he burst through the hedge and ran with verbal news of their danger to the first line of the Eastfolks.

And though Toby thus spoilt the great battle which Jacques wished his brave comrade to behold, that brave comrade did at least enjoy some return for his patience, for he saw the Eastfolks, regardless of what the woodlands might hold for them, sprint with hearty yells across the turnip-fields, in pursuit of the enemy that had failed to ambush them. But that enemy was quick away, and though the Eastfolks killed a few and wounded a few, and captured a dozen, it was not what you would call a real battle. Still, such as it was, it doubtless afforded entertainment to the brave comrade.

Returning down the hill, Toby Trotter found the brave comrade's master lying three-parts strangled, but only three-parts, in his cave. Toby pulled him out and looked round for his assailant. But Johann Müller was fleeing swiftly by hedge and brook and woodland; and Jacques' mother, you will be pleased to hear, has been paying no rent all this hard winter.



The Siege of Wycherley

By A. G. HOUBLON

Illustrated by Paul Hardy

I

"WHAT ails you——?" began Walter Malford to his horse, but his question was never finished. Even as he spoke, something sang past his face, and landed with a thud into a tree on his right. He gave the thing, which was a cross-bow bolt, one glance, and then, swinging his horse round, set off in the direction from which it had come, drawing his sword as he went. Before he had gone far, however, he was joined by a middle-aged archer, also on horseback.

"Your pardon, Squire, but this is madness," said the archer, with the bluntness of an old family retainer. "The way out of the wood lies yonder. Let us take it."

"Madness!" exclaimed the youngster, angrily. "Another bolt, Simon, and but for Robin, here, checking at a fox, which broke from the bracken at his feet, it had paid me for good and all. As it was, the bolt missed me by but a hand's breath."

"And you would give the skulker a chance of another shot, which would not miss, Master Walter?" replied the old soldier. "Nothing would please the crossbow-man's master better."

"That's true," said the boy. "But what am I to do? Sir Roland Morane means to kill me, I am certain. My estate will fall to the King, which means to the Queen-Mother, which means to Roger Mortimer, and Sir Roland is high in favour with them both. It has been crossbow bolts till now. As they have failed, doubtless he will try poison, and, to clear himself, will hang a scullion or two. Then he will be Lord of Wycherley."

"Which the saints forfend," said the archer. "As well let the foul fiend loose among your lordship's folk as Sir Roland and his Flemings."

"Then what is to be done?" returned Walter. "I am as helpless as a hare in snare."

In that age, it was bad to be young and a holder of great possessions, without powerful near kinsmen to protect you. Edward the Second was recently dead, or so it was said. Edward the Third was still a child, and the Queen-Mother was Regent, which meant that her favourite, Roger Mortimer, was master of England, which was very bad for England.

Walter Malford's case was but typical of the treatment of rich heirs and heiresses all over the country.

When he had been left an orphan, the King, which meant Mortimer, had appointed Sir Roland Morane, a *protégé* of the latter, as his guardian. Walter had a distant kinsman by marriage, Sir John Brydges of Lutgar's Hall, who, by rights, should have been his guardian. But Sir John was of an adventurous turn of mind, and had been away for two years or more, fighting the pagans, Finns and others, in North

Europe. So Wycherley, the Malford estate, became Mortimer's prey, and Sir Roland had established himself there a few months previously, with a horde of foreign men-at-arms, and had at once begun by turning out most of the family men-at-arms, the chaplain, the bailiff, and everyone else who was likely to be a hindrance to his plans.

"Well, Squire," said the archer, slowly, "I have heard minstrels sing songs of old fights, and particularly of Santlac, where it is said your honour's ancestors, under Duke William, drew the Saxons from their entrenchments by pretending to run away, and so defeated them."

"I have heard that, too," said the boy, impatiently. "But how does that help me?"

"My rede, Squire," said the old soldier, who had served his young master's father in many wars, "is that you imitate your honour's ancestors, and leave Wycherley for the time, before you are forced to leave it for ever. I met a forester but now, who told me that Sir John Brydges is back from the Northern wars."

"Sir John back!" exclaimed the boy, eagerly. "Why did you not tell me before?"

"Because I did not know till just now, when Sir Roland's Flemish crossbow-man was trying to shoot you."

"It matters not," rejoined Walter. "The next bolt may be better aimed. This very day we will go to him."

"No better day," said Simon. "Sir Roland will not be home till to-morrow. That forester also told me, Squire, that Sir John has brought the strangest squire with him from the North, in the place of Master Robert Milston, who was killed; a man dark like a paynim, but with a beardless face and long black hair."

"He may have half a score such, for aught I care," said Walter. "Hurry, Simon, I will not wait till I am safe at Lutgar's Hall."

II

Walter Malford, attended only by Simon, reached Lutgar's Hall at supper-time, and was made very welcome by his kinsman. But the older man guessed that the boy had something on his mind, and, when the meal was done, took him away with him to a small upper room.

"Now, lad, we can talk," he said. "What is your grief? For well I know you have one. Is it a fine to the Queen, to pay for Master Mortimer's pleasures?"

"A fine!" exclaimed the boy. "Would it were only that! Early this year, Mortimer comes from Devizes with parchments from the Queen, and leaves a popinjay of his, Sir Roland Morane, to be my guardian." And the boy poured out the story of his troubles, with the attempts on his life.

"It was indeed an evil rede that took me to the North," said Sir John, gravely, when the boy had finished. "I should have been here, and, maybe, Master Morane had found use for his wits and his Flemings elsewhere. And now, Walter?"

"Now, if you will help me, I will turn out that murderer," said Walter, passionately. "There are many secret ways into the castle, of which Morane and his crew know naught. Such of my men who remain will rise within against the Flemings, if the rest and yours are without to help them."

"Doubtless," said the knight. "We could easily win Wycherley that way, and hold it—till the Queen and Mortimer send an army against us."

"Then would all Wiltshire rise against them."

"What good would that do? Later, when Edward is a man, we will lay Mortimer by the heels. But the time is not yet ripe."

"Then am I to sit down tamely——"

"Nenni, nenni!" said the knight, smiling. "There are more ways of killing a man than with a lance. Let me think. You Malfords have held your land some two hundred and fifty years. You had it from Duke William after Santlac, did you not?"

"Aye, but as Sir James de Malford married Gytha, the Saxon heiress of the Manor, we may say that we have held it for more than four hundred years. What of that?"

"Patience. Now, if I remember well, there is a wise woman's saying which tells of a curse on anyone seizing Wycherley unlawfully, while a child of Sir James and Lady Gytha lives."

"Some foolish old wives' tale. They talk of it in the village."

"Let them talk, and the more the better," said Sir John. "There is, at times, more in these old wives' tales than you boys wot of. It is in my mind that the curse will prove your friend. Now as to yourself, Morane will surely send here to seek you, so you had best take to the woods. The weather is warm, and you will be well enough, till it is time for you to enter Wycherley again as its lord. My squire, Skroeling, will go with you, and gladly. He has little love for four walls. Had you speech with him, Walter?"

"Only a greeting. Who is he, fair sir? Some Northern pagan?"

"Neither pagan, for I saw him christened myself and am his godfather, nor yet a

Northman. He is a foreigner from a land far across the western seas."

"Land across the Western seas? Surely there is none there."

"There is, for the Northmen set colonies there before Duke William's day. They have one they call Winland, from which Skroeling comes. His father is, so the Northmen told me, a great Prince among the people of those parts, who are very skilled in hunting and war. Skroeling had a mind to see other lands, so came back with the Northmen, and has sailed and fought with them many years. He wished to see this land before he sailed home again, and, as I found him a very worthy man-at-arms and a courteous gentleman, I brought him with me. It is in my mind that he will help you."

"I don't see how, and he but a week in England."

"Boys are always wise," said Sir John, with a smile. "But we old men know a few things still. Let us have him in, and I will tell him my rede and we will hear his. He does not talk before strangers, but, when you know him, you will find him merry, and loving well a jest."

III

When Sir Roland Morane rode out to hunt at Savernake, on the day of Walter's escape, he had felt extremely well pleased with the way things were going. All his life he had taken care to be on the winning side. He had held to Piers Gaveston as long as he had prospered, but had gone to the other party at the right moment, and had been loudest in his denunciation of poor Edward of Caernavon and his friends. He was now a strong supporter of Queen Isabella and Mortimer, and had his reward in the guardianship of Walter Malford. Also, the Queen had given him a hint that, supposing Walter died, he might not, given a proper consideration, have to shift his quarters.

He had taken the hint, and set to work methodically to act upon it. In the first place, he had got rid of Father Mark, the old family chaplain, who was neither to be bribed nor coerced, with the steward, household officials, and a number of men-at-arms who might have interfered with his plans. In their places he installed Flemings, who knew nothing and cared less about the Malfords. Altogether the task seemed almost ridiculously easy. An unlucky bolt or some unwholesome food, and the thing was done. After all, the woods were full of outlaws and masterless men, who might very well let fly a bolt, given the chance, at their natural enemy, the Lord of the Manor.

Walter's disappearance alive was a severe shock, and put him in a very bad temper, when he heard of it on his return. He sent a squire at once to Lutgar's Hall, as the boy's most likely refuge. Sir John received the messenger courteously, and told him that Walter had lain a night at his castle, and ridden on towards Andover next morning. So he had, but, a mile outside Lutgar's Hall, he had turned north into the woods, which in those days stretched west from Weyhill, past Biddesden, Lutgar's Hall, and Collingbourne up to Wycherley, and as far north and south again. Walter was as safe from pursuit as if he had been in France.

However, this set-back did not trouble him long. If Walter chose to run away, so much the worse for Walter. Morane sent letters to his patrons, giving the news, and settled down as if already real owner of Wycherley. Then came another damper on his satisfaction, in the shape of a rumour about the unpleasant consequences of usurping the Wycherley estate. Naturally he pooh-poohed it, and threatened fearful penalties on any peasant heard repeating the curse, which was, of course, recorded in doggerel verse. But one morning, on waking up, he found a parchment on his floor, and when his Flemish chaplain deciphered the writing Sir Roland was very angry and a little frightened. He was a man who left nothing to chance, and slept with his door well barricaded. He could see no human way by which the parchment could have been got into his room, and the message on it was uncompromisingly threatening:—

> While sib to James and Gytha breathes the air,
> Let thief of Wycherley the hill folks' power beware!

The hill folk meant the fairies, who were also supposed to be largely in league with the powers below, and Sir Roland, though he boasted he did not believe in them, was secretly very much afraid of them. Also, he could not altogether deceive himself. He felt fairly sure that Walter, who was certainly sib to James and Gytha, was still breathing, and that therefore he himself was, in intention at least, "Thief of Wycherley."

However, the hill folk showed no sign of taking action, and his confidence was returning, when one night a noise outside broke his sleep, and he awoke, fancying, for the moment, that he was in Hainault. Then he remembered

where he was. "A dream," he said, sleepily, and turned over to sleep. Then the noise came again; this time unmistakable. It was the long-drawn-out howl of a wolf.

Sir Roland started. He had no idea that there were any wolves so far south. But if any had come in from Wales or the North, it was a most extraordinary piece of good luck, and he decided at once that they were not to be molested, but reserved for his own hunting. But, when it came to marking them down next day, not a trace of them was to be found. No one had seen them, though many people had heard them, especially near the castle. The peasants, who were quite convinced that Walter's disappearance was due to Morane's having made away with him, declared that the wolves were not flesh and blood animals at all. They were fairy wolves, they decided, come to avenge the unlawful ousting of the Malfords, and the tale soon spread among Morane's men-at-arms, and so to him.

Sir Roland was very angry, and did his best to crush the story, without any success. Every night the wolves could be heard howling round and about Wycherley, sometimes near the castle, sometimes near the hamlet. But in spite of the most systematic search, they were never seen; nor, indeed, did it appear that they had so far killed any domestic animal. This, however, proved nothing, as there was ample game in the woods to support a wolf or two, or even the usual small pack of half a dozen.

The peasants became more sure than ever that the ban was being accomplished, and even the Hainault and Flemish men-at-arms grew nervous, in spite of their master's stormings. But even he was convinced one night about three weeks after Walter's disappearance. Sir Roland had retired to his room, the men-at-arms and others were settling down for the night in the hall and elsewhere, when suddenly every man and woman in the place was aroused by the ill-omened howling, as it seemed, on the castle roof itself.

The noise lasted a good two minutes, during which no one dared to stir, not even Sir Roland. Then it died away, leaving the castle strangely quiet.

There was a moment's pause, and then Sir Roland rushed out, sword in hand, shouting for lights. A few of the soldiers collected their scared wits enough to obey him, and a small party stormed up to the roof, and found nothing, not even the watchman.

"The foul fiend has carried him off," said a Hainaulter, incautiously, crossing himself as he spoke. Sir Roland turned on him savagely.

"Then the foul fiend shall have thee, at the end of a rope, ere sunrise," he exclaimed, "an thou findest him not! Rouse ye, knaves! There never was a ghost yet that could brook a sword."

The soldiers had huddled together for safety. Fighting and war were their life, and they feared nothing that breathed. But this ghostly wolf was another proposition altogether. However, they feared Sir Roland even more, and they dispersed, trembling, to look for the watchman.

In a few minutes they found him, lying motionless by the side of a cover to another stairway up, the shadow of which had hidden him. At first they thought he was dead. But there was no sign of blood, and they noticed that he was breathing painfully and very sick.

"What ails the man?" said Sir Roland. As he spoke, an old soldier stooped and picked up an arrow, glanced at it, crossed himself, and dropped it hastily. With an oath, Sir Roland picked it up, and, when he had seen it, he started.

It was a roughly made shaft, with pigeon's feathers; but what made him start was its head. It was pointed with a roughly chipped flint, tied on with raw hide. Even Sir Roland could not pretend not to know that it was the kind known as a fairy arrow.

"The saints be praised!"

The words were gasped, and, turning, Sir Roland saw the watchman sitting up, still breathing painfully, his eyes wide open, and his face grey with terror.

"Oh, my lord!" he gasped. "I thought never to see the light again."

"Speak up, man," said Sir Roland. "Who struck you down? Whence came this arrow?"

The watchman looked at it, saw its flint head, and shuddered.

"Then 'twas no fancy of mine?" he said. "My lord, I was making my round of the walls, and, when I had passed the little high turret, I heard wolves howling behind me. I turned with my pike, but saw no wolves. My lord, I care not if I live or die, but I saw the foul fiend himself, horned and tailed, black, and covered with red flames, with a bow in his hands, and with him something like a monstrous bear, only white. And both howled like wolves. Scarce knowing what I did, I lowered my pike to charge them, but as I did so the fiend raised his bow and I was struck with great violence—well it was I had on my brigantine—and I knew no more till—— Mercy upon us! Hear them now, my lord!"

As he spoke, the awful howling broke out again outside the castle. All rushed to the walls, and, looking over, saw two fearful beings, on little white horses, racing round the castle, howling as they went. And one of them looked black in the dim light, and had horns like a bull's on his head, and a tail. The other was a huge white bear, astride of his horse like a man.

IV

It was no use now saying that the fairies were not abroad. They had been seen that night by at least a score, including the usurping knight himself. However, Morane determined to hold the castle, and, to that end, he instructed his Flemish clerk, a monk from Bruges, to hold an exorcism. The exorcism might have been successful, only, when it was half over, the howling broke out close outside the castle, another elfin arrow, red from head to feathers, was shot in through the window, and the clerk fainted with terror. A man from the gate guard ran in to say that he had seen the fiend, alone this time, on his little white horse, although it was broad daylight; and that, after shooting his arrow, he had galloped away. To cheer everyone up, he added that his body was covered with red and yellow flames.

The "Thief of Wycherley" was made to feel the power of the hill folk to the full. A night or two later he was awakened by a strange, strong smell, to find his room full of smoke, amid which he saw the fiend, naked, horned and tailed, with his bow ready. Sir Roland chanced the arrow and threw his dagger, and—as he thought—saw it pass through the intruder. The smoke grew thicker and thicker, till only the horn-crowned face of the fiend was visible. Then the bow twanged, and another blood-red, stone-tipped fairy arrow was added to his collection, fixed tight in the wooden head of the bed. There was another puff of strong-scented smoke, in which the apparition disappeared, with a wolf howl that seemed almost like a mocking laugh. Sir Roland lay quaking on his bed while the smoke dispersed, and, when the air was clear again, found that he was alone. His courage came back, and he searched the room, but could find no trace of his fearful visitor. Obviously he could not have entered by the barred windows or heavily bolted door, and there was no other way by which he could have come, for the walls were of stone, covered with tapestry. His dagger also had disappeared.

He did not again see the being inside the castle; but his men did, or said they did, frequently. However, to compensate for that he saw him several times from the windows, heard him howling at all hours, indoors and out. He also acquired a new, blood-red elfin arrow almost every day. Sometimes the fiend was seen to shoot them, but, as often as not, they appeared in places to which they could not possibly have been shot from outside.

In despair, he organised search parties and drives of the surrounding woods, but with no success. To be effective in such a drive, the men should spread out in a long line. But not even the fear of their master could make the Flemings and Hainaulters spread out. They were now much more afraid of the hill folk, and preferred to keep very close together.

Then, perforce, because to have persevered would have meant mutiny, Sir Roland gave up the drives. In searching a wood, one day, the men had had to dismount, leaving their horses in charge of a couple of men-at-arms on the fringe of the wood. They went on, in fear and trembling, till they were well in the wood, when the ill-omened howling broke out behind them. They bunched at once, and then, after a moment's breathless pause, with one accord they broke and ran for their horses.

But even this refuge was denied them. The horses were gone, every one of them, and so were the horse guards. This completely demoralised them, and they broke again and ran for the castle, leaving a trail of steel caps, helms, bascinets, shields, pikes, crossbows, swords, and belts, thrown away to enable them to run faster.

Sir Roland had not gone with the party, and when the first breathless, disarmed Fleming arrived, he ordered him to be hanged incontinent. But, while the preparations were being made, three more arrived in the same plight. Sir Roland grew crimson with fury, and ordered them to be hanged, too. Then two more arrived, then half a dozen, and the rest could be seen tailed off in the distance. Sir Roland turned from crimson to the colour of ash. It dawned upon the knight that, if he hanged all the runaways, he would have no garrison to speak of left, and that Mortimer, whose men they were, would probably demand a reckoning. So he made a virtue of necessity and pardoned them, merely ordering them to go back and collect their gear.

They were just starting, when two more men appeared, fully armed this time, but walking slowly, leaning on their pikes, looking half-dazed, and covered with mud.

"Ho!" exclaimed Sir Roland Morane. "Here be two at least who have not forgotten their honour as men-at-arms. They shall receive promotion over you other losels. Who are they?"

"May it please your lordship," said a man, "they were the horse guards. The fiend took them."

"Seems he has quickly tired of their company," said Sir Roland. "Ho, knaves, I hear you have been guests of a strange host. Did you like his hospitality so little that you left him thus early?"

Sir Roland was very badly scared, and tried to mask his fear by an attempt at a joke. But the men did not see the joke.

"May it please your lordship," said one, "we were guarding the horses, when we were struck down, seeing no man. But presently my wit returned to me, and I saw two of the horned riders driving away the horses. Then a blackness came over me again."

"Then you were not carried away?"

"Praise be to the saints, no, my lord. When at last our wits came to us, we found ourselves in a wet ditch, with very sore heads. See, my lord, our steel caps are dented."

"By my sword, the enemy strikes hard!" said Sir Roland, looking at the dents. "But two of them! Well, let there be twoscore, I shall not yield?"

But, for all his words, the end was inevitable. The few Malford men he had retained had all deserted. Even some of his Flemings and Hainaulters had gone too, and those that remained were terrified and sulky. Sir Roland was no coward, but even his nerve broke down at last.

One day, not long after, his platter was shot off the table at dinner time.

Leaving a trail of steel caps, bascinets, shields, pikes, and crossbows, they broke in confusion and ran for the castle.

"A murrain on the castle and Malford!" he shouted. "Mortimer can give the manor to whom he pleases, to old John Brydges an he will. I'll none of such a nest of evil."

Ping! His great silver nef, which stood in front of him on the table, and held his table

gear, toppled over, scattering its contents on the rushes. Everybody drew back, even Sir Roland himself, for another of the ill-omened red arrows was fast in it, to its great damage. No one liked to move, but at last his Flemish chaplain, whose business it was to attend to such matters, stepped timidly forward.

"Fair lord," he said, "there is a parchment tied to the thing."

"Then pluck it off, man!" cried Sir Roland. "Plague take it, it has done great hurt to my nef!"

The monk obeyed.

"There are two," he said, "and covered with writings."

"So the foul fiend is a clerk," said Roland. "That I can well believe. Read his letters, Sir Monk."

The monk glanced through them, and looked visibly ill at ease.

"He knows not the reverence due to a great lord," he said.

"That I doubt not—look at my nef. Read."

"The first runs thus," said the chaplain.

"Let Wycherley's Thief, if weary of my play,
Put seal on to this paper, and hie him swift away.

"That is the first. The other is in good Latin and sets forth that your lordship, finding no profit in the wardship, do resign it forthwith of your free will, to Sir John Brydges."

"By the saints, that will I do!" exclaimed Sir Roland. "No more will I bear with this haunted manor. Ho! knaves. Pack our gear and let us begone. And be careful to take naught of Malford's. I want not the goblins to follow us. I will not sleep another night here."

In a couple of hours, the last of Sir Roland's band rode out, leaving the castle without even a watchman. Yet, even as he paused to look back, he saw the gates swing together and the drawbridge slowly rising.

"I am well out of that," he muttered. "Never again will I disbelieve—saints above, the castle is alive with men!"

This was not strictly true. But certainly a dozen or more armed men had suddenly appeared above the gate house, and among them one whose coat armour was a gold chevron on a blue shield, a blazon he would remember and hate all his days, for it was that of the Malfords. Another face that looked out from a bascinet seemed unusually dark, a third looked suspiciously like Sir John Brydges, while a grey-headed clerk, who had also appeared, could be none other than the banished Father Mark.

"Walter Malford!" roared Sir Roland. "How got you there?"

"By enchantment, gentle knight," replied Walter, with a grin. "I am sib to James and Gytha, and the hill folk are my friends. But it would seem that they like you not. You seem short of horses. Look in yonder valley, and you will find yours. They are none the worse for their short spell of freedom."

Here the dark-faced warrior grinned also, and the others tittered.

"But come within, alone, and drink a cup of wine before you go," went on the youngster. "Do not shame me by leaving my castle without a parting draught. Fear not. The enchantment is passed, now that I am come to my own again, and we give you safe conduct. Only come alone."

Sir Roland hesitated. He had a wholesome fear of Wycherley Castle, but he felt that there must be some explanation of all he had gone through, and he fancied they meant to give it to him. He went back to the castle, and was admitted to a little room he had not seen before, at the top of the gate-house, in which he found Sir John, Walter, Father Mark, and the dark-faced squire, whose appearance was vaguely familiar.

He drank a cup of wine, trying to remember where he had seen the strange man before. Then light came to him.

"By my sword!" he exclaimed. "The fiend!" and he shrank away.

"At your service, gentle knight," said Sir John. "But we know him as Skroeling, for his name in his own tongue is one no man can pronounce, a very gentle and worthy gentleman and warrior, from Winland across the Western Seas. Now I will tell you all, but remember this, Sir Roland: that, if you tell tales of what I am going to say at Court, not one of us here will remember aught of them. Look at these."

Walter pulled away a cloth from a bench, and revealed a headdress made from the head and horns of a black cow, and a girdle to which the cow's tail was attached, together with a big white thick-furred skin, a bow and a few of the elfin arrows.

"It is well for Walter that I brought Skroeling with me from the north," went on the knight. "It seems that, for certain sports among his people, the warriors paint their bodies red and yellow, and don horns and tail, even like these. Here, too, are his arrows. His people, having no iron, use sharp stones for arrow and spear

heads, and it was easy for him to make them. We are well found with flints in Wiltshire, and once men did the like here, and silly country folk call such arrow-heads elfin arrows. The skin is that of a northern bear, which I brought with me. It became Walter here, bravely. But I think he was more comfortable when Skroeling dyed his body, and accoutred him in horns and tail, like himself. Father Mark, here, wrote the letters, and as to the rest—why, Wycherley Castle abounds in secret ways, and it was easy for the goblins to come and go as they pleased, just as it was for us to enter the castle unseen."

"But the smoke?" blurted out Sir Roland.

"Skroeling is a cunning man," said Sir John. "He knows the properties of herbs and trees, and made a brew that smokes vastly but without flame. Now, Sir Roland, we hold your paper, sealed by you and witnessed by your clerk. Further, forget not that not a word was spoken in this room but very courteous greetings and farewells."

All the same, Sir Roland did tell Roger Mortimer and the Queen, and got very scant comfort for his pains.

"Either," said Mortimer, "you are a liar or a fool, I know not nor care which. You have lost your chance, and it will be long ere I give you such another. And needs must we let Brydges be guardian to young Malford. His friends will not bear you again, or another who is not of them. Now go and see if you can find Scots on the Border. Goblins are not more hard to come by, and, with your experience at Wycherley, you should know how to deal with them."

So, full of wrath and shame, Sir Roland Morane departed to hunt disappearing Scots. But, down in Wiltshire, the dependants on Wycherley were full of peace and happiness, as folks should be who are under the special protection of the fairies or the invisible powers; they were not particular as to which it was, and Walter and his friends thought it best not to enlighten them.

A GERMAN INVENTION!

Smuggins (in blissful ignorance): "Oh, you're admiring my tie, are you? It's a patent detachable one, you know. It's a topping idea—never falls off. It was—er—invented in Germany."

THE KINGS OF ITALY AND THEIR POSTAGE STAMPS

THE first stamps issued for "United Italy" in March, 1862, bear the head of the king, Victor Emmanuel II., in plain embossment within a coloured frame. Except for the fact that they are supplied with perforations, these stamps are identical with those which had been in use for some years previously in Sardinia under Victor Emmanuel's rule.

The King and his supporters had been far too busy during the strenuous days of the foundation of the new kingdom of Italy to attend to such matters of detail as postage stamps, and were consequently glad to avail themselves of a supply from the Sardinian design, which, fortunately, bore no name of country.

When a new stamp of 15 centesimi was prepared in 1863, the name "Italiano" was introduced, and from that day to this all the Italian postage stamps have borne the words "Postale Italiano," or "Poste Italiane."

(*a*) (*b*)

The "provisional" issues for United Italy, 1862-1863.

The stamps printed from the Sardinian plates were, of course, only adopted as a stop-gap or provisional issue, being superseded by a regular issue printed in London by Messrs. De La Rue & Co.

The two illustrations given here show (*a*) the type of the stamps of 1862, printed from the Sardinian plates, with head of Victor Emmanuel to right, and (*b*) the stamp of 15 centesimi, with the King's head to left, issued in February, 1863. Now there are a few important points to be noted about these stamps before we pass on to the regular Italian issues. In the first place the 10c., 20c., 40c., and 80c. stamps of type *a* have a perforation gauging 11½, 12; specimens found with various other perfs., varying from 7 to 14, are fraudulent, being the imperforate printings for Sardinia supplied with false perforations. In January, 1863, a stamp of 15 centesimi, a value never included in the Sardinian series, was issued, but *without perforation*. Here, again, specimens with bogus perforations abound, and the collector must be on his guard against them; one and all are fraudulent. The same remarks apply to the 15 centesimi of the new design (type *b*) issued in February, 1863.

At first glance, by the way, it seems extremely odd that these 15 centesimi stamps, each of which had a currency of only a few months, are still remarkably plentiful and cheap, both unused and in used condition. As regards the unused stamps, the fact that they may still be purchased for a penny or twopence apiece is explained by the placing of extensive government remainders on the stamp market. As for the "used" supply it is to be remembered that 15 centesimi represented at that time the new single-letter rate of postage in Italy, and consequently very large supplies of this value would be required.

There are no rarities among the provisional issues of Italy, the scarcest item being the 80 centesimi in yellow or orange-yellow, which is worth vastly more in used than in unused condition. An interesting error, though of no great rarity, is the 15c. blue of the January, 1863, issue, with the embossed head of King Victor Emmanuel placed upside down.

So far no watermark had been used for the Italian stamps, but on the inauguration of the regular issues, a paper watermarked with a large crown was employed. This crown watermark is constant throughout the issues from December, 1863, to the present time. The gauge of perforation, too, has shown but little variation during the same long period of years; so that two of the usual sources of difficulty in

stamp-collecting are practically removed from the path of the young collector of Italian stamps.

Very different from the stamps of the old Sardinian pattern are the labels of December, 1863, with their bold profile of King Victor Emmanuel. After some fifteen months of currency they ceased to be printed in London, the plates being dispatched thence to Turin,

Italian stamps with heads of Kings Victor Emmanuel II., Humbert, and Victor Emmanuel III.

where all subsequent Italian issues have been produced.

There are many shades of colour to be found in this issue, but otherwise there is no feature of conspicuous interest until we come to the provisional surcharged stamp of January, 1865—the 15c. blue overprinted to serve as a stamp of 20 centesimi. This latter value had been omitted, possibly by an oversight, from the first stamps supplied from London. There being a pronounced demand for it an emergency label was prepared, and this, by reason of certain interesting discoveries, has become one of the most notable stamps in the Italian list from a philatelic point of view.

According to present knowledge there were three printings of the 20c. on 15c. in the months of January, February, and March, 1865, respectively. For the first printing, or rather overprinting, new plates of the 15c. stamp were prepared, and although the fact was not discovered by collectors for many years afterwards, the stamps from these new plates had a number of white dots distributed about them—it is assumed as a safeguard against forgery. You see, the value of the stamps was being *raised* by the overprint from 15c. to 20c., and thus there would be a temptation to unscrupulous persons to procure large quantities of the genuine unused stamps and supply them with forged overprints, thus increasing the value of each stamp by 5 centesimi. If, however, the fear of forgery were the motive for decorating the stamps with these mysterious white dots, the authorities must have concluded that their apprehensions were groundless, for in the third supply of the 20c. overprint (March, 1865) they used the ordinary stamps, without white dots, for the purpose of overprinting.

The three varieties of the 20c. on 15c. may be thus described for the guidance of Captainites.

Type I (January, 1865).—Twelve white dots, eight of which are placed in the corners of the stamp, and four above and below the stars at right and left of the stamp in the band that carries the inscriptions, " Poste Italiane," etc.

Type II (February, 1865).—Four white dots only, placed above and below the stars, as already described.

Type III (March, 1865).—No white dots at all, the overprinting being on the normal 15c. stamps from the original plate.

In 1867 a regular stamp of 20 centesimi was provided, being first printed by De La Rue in London, and afterwards by the government contractors in Turin. Ten years later there was a reshuffling of the colours of the 10c. and 20c stamps; the 10c. being changed from buff to blue, and the 20c., formerly in blue, being produced in orange-buff and orange.

Two of the most familiar of Italian stamps made their appearance in the period 1863–65—the very low valued 1c. and 2c. stamps of the large numeral type. For length of service I should say these labels would compare favourably with all other European issues. The 1 centesimo was the only stamp of this denomination to be issued in Italy for a period of thirty-three years. The 2 centesimi stamp also had a very long life, but in this case there were provisional issues during periods of shortage in 1877 and in 1890.

Two long-lived Italian stamps—the 1c. of 1863 and the 2c. of 1865.

The ill-fated King Humbert, who was assassinated in the year 1900, succeeded Victor Emmanuel II. in 1878, and in the following year we first saw his head on the national postage stamps—a typical Italian head, with hair brushed upward and a moustache of great luxuriance.

The " Humbert " stamps, as I dare say many observant Captainites have noticed, show a peculiarity common to many Italian issues—namely, a different scheme of corner-ornamentation for each value of the set. The stamps of Victor Emmanuel II. (the regular issues), of Humbert, and of the earlier stamps of the King now reigning are all treated in this way. The difference in some cases is very slight, but still there is a difference, and in the case of a series of stamps all bearing the same portrait a scheme of this kind does much to take away from the appearance of sameness.

The few rare stamps of King Humbert's reign occur in the provisional issues. For instance, in 1890 there was a shortage of 2c. stamps, and shortly afterwards the stock of the 20 centesimi

was temporarily exhausted. Provisionals were created by surcharging these values on the 5c. and 30c. respectivly. A variety of the 2c. on 5c. that is extremely scarce, and distinctly a stamp to be looked for, shows the overprinted numeral " 2 " with an abnormally thin foot.

To meet a further shortage of 2c. stamps this value was overprinted upon a number of different denominations of the large " Pacchi Postale " (Parcel Post) stamps. The stamps normally are common enough, but an inversion of the surcharge occurred in printing some of the 2c. on 10c., 2c. on 50c., and 2c. on 1 lira 25c; and these are scarce.

Current stamps of the Maldive Islands, first issued in 1909.

The Italian stamps of the present reign (King Victor Emmanuel III.) are a simple and straightforward series so far as they have gone. Here, however, we have to note the first deviations from the " perf. 14 " which had hitherto been the invariable gauge for Italian issues. The 15c., slate, of 1906, is perforated 12, and the new type of the same stamp issued in 1909 has a gauge of 13½, 14.

A tribute was paid to the memory of the great Italian hero, Garibaldi, in April, 1910, by the issue of two stamps bearing his head to mark the fiftieth anniversary of the freedom of Sicily. Evidently this idea of issuing commemorative stamps rather tickled the Italian Government, for, seven months later, they favoured us with another pair of Garibaldian labels by way of commemorating the National Plebiscite of the Southern States in 1860; and yet again in 1911 a set of four stamps came out as a reminder that the kingdom of Italy had celebrated its Jubilee.

The stamps of Italy are admirably adapted to the need of the young collector in search of an inexpensive country to specialise. For very little money one can make a brave show in this department, and the stamps have the merit of belonging to a country traditionally friendly to John Bull, which is a thing not to be sneezed at just now.

Watermark of the Maldive Islands stamps.

Another time we must have a chat about the subsidiary issues of Italy, including the express-delivery, parcel-post, and postage-due stamps.

LITTLE COLONIES TO SPECIALISE

The Maldive Islands

The little group of islands in the Indian Ocean, known as the Maldives, is under the control of the Government of Ceylon and is not administered by the Crown Agents. They belong, in fact, to the increasing number of minor British Possessions which are handed over to the care of the nearest important Colony or Dominion. The Cook Islands, for instance, are in the New Zealand sphere of influence, also the islands of Penrhyn, Aitutaki, etc. The Commonwealth of Australia, as a result of the active part she is taking in the War on Germany's possessions in the southern seas, will probably be placed in authority over various new British acquisitions in those latitudes. If Australia, Canada, and other important Dominions are to be styled the Daughter-Nations of the Empire, these minor places might be referred to as Britannia's Grand-daughters.

The Maldive Islands are traditionally tributary to Ceylon, and in token of his allegiance the native sultan sends an embassy to Colombo every year. Many people had never heard of the group until the announcement was made, some twenty years ago, that special postage stamps would be issued for the little archipelago.

The first stamps issued (1906) were simply the then current 2c., 3c., 4c., 5c., 15c., and 25c. stamps of Ceylon with a black overprint, " Maldives." Stamp collectors were caught napping over this issue, which is now so scarce that a set of six stamps, unused, fetches £2 or more, while the used stamps are still more difficult to buy. Yet the stamps had a currency of nearly three years, and it is quite obvious that the philatelic demand must have been very small if the present catalogue quotations are justifiable.

The number of stamps genuinely used for bona-fide postal purposes in the islands would necessarily be limited. The inhabitants, mostly native Mohammedans, are probably not very prolific correspondents, and the purely " white " population is limited to those who are interested in the exportation of the dried fish, cowrie shells, and tortoiseshell, which are the staple products of the archipelago. But one would have thought that a British Colonial issue, on sale for nearly three years, would have been purchased by collectors and dealers in such quantities as to keep the price down to a much more moderate level.

The overprinted Cingalese stamps were of course only in the nature of a stop-gap issue. Stamps of special design, bearing a view of an ancient Mohammedan temple, made their appearance in May, 1909. The fact that only four values—2c., 3c., 5c., and 10c—are employed, and that the highest of these is the equivalent of less than twopence, proves the restricted nature of the islands' postal requirements.

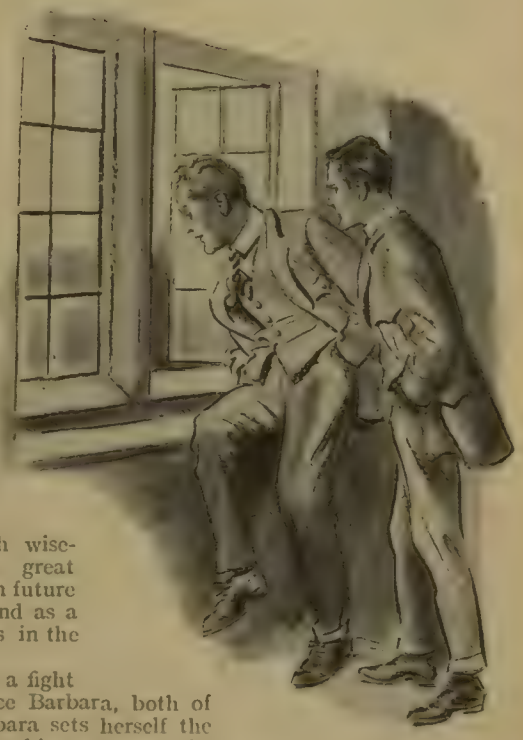
There are, so far, no varieties known in printing, paper, perforation, or watermark—the latter, by the way, being rosettes in multiple.

WHO CARES?

A Public School Story

By HYLTON CLEAVER

Illustrated by H. M. Brock, R.I.



SYNOPSIS OF PREVIOUS INSTALMENTS

James Roscoe enters Harley School, and is assigned to Godwin's house. He is a surly youth, ill mannered, and entirely devoid of public spirit. Early in the term he is incited by Menzies, a senior, to steal chocolate from the village sweet-shop, and for this he receives a thrashing from Laing, the school captain.

Laing has just been transferred by the head master to Godwin's house, hitherto the most badly managed in the school. Mr. Godwin objects to prefects in his house using the cane, and is angered to find that Laing intends to avail himself of the school rule which permits him to do so. Laing is of small stature, with wise-looking features, and throughout the school has a great reputation for sagacity. He determines that Godwin's shall in future make a better display in the house games than hitherto, and as a result of his efforts, the house secures the first three places in the mile at the sports.

While walking near Harley village one day, Roscoe stops a fight between two dogs belonging to a Mrs. North and her niece Barbara, both of whom take a keen interest in Harley School games. Barbara sets herself the task of reforming Roscoe, and persuades her aunt to invite him to spend the coming holiday at their house. A friend from Oxford is also to stay with them.

CHAPTER XXIII

INTRODUCING A COACH

A WEEK later Harley had broken up, and Roscoe, having shed *pro tem.* his unfortunate air of chronic gloom, had moved with an occasional bag or so into "Westholme," to the intense delight of himself, his uncle, and of Barbara.

Roscoe found awaiting him a very pleasant atmosphere of happiness and release from the pettiness of everyday life. But he found that he was not to be left in peace very long. On his third day the giant from Oxford arrived, a tall athletic young man with a humorous mouth, deep-set eyes, and big brown hands capable of wielding the willow in a manner securing many runs.

Roscoe was first brought to his notice by Barbara, whom he noticed from the far end of the garden leading forward what at first sight (as he subsequently declared) he took to be a clockwork scarecrow. He himself stood on the lawn swinging a golf club at a blade of grass; he was bare-headed, and the spring sun was glinting on his crisp black hair. He had arrived that morning, when both Barbara and Roscoe had been out. After lunch with Mrs. North he had strolled out on to the lawn with a club.

Barbara, returning with James, hurried out after him calling apologies from a distance.

"I'm awfully sorry," said she. "I thought you weren't coming till this afternoon."

"Oh—ah!" said the Oxford gentleman, amiably.

"This," Barbara went on, "is my chum that I told you about—Roscoe. Roscoe, this is Billy Garnett."

"How d'you do?" said the large man, crushing Roscoe's hand into a lifeless pulp. "Play golf?"

James said that he did not. Then he shuffled his feet. He remarked that the day was warm, undid his overcoat, looked round, thought that with Barbara's permission he would take a wash.

"All right," said Barbara. "Come back here."

When he had gone, Garnett leaned upon his club and regarded Barbara severely.

"What did I understand," he inquired, "that you wished me to do with that?"

"He's not a 'that,'" said Barbara. "He tried to stop a dog fight."

"H'm," said Garnett, with a grin.

"He doesn't play any games at all," she admitted, with a sigh. "And that's where I need you. I want you to make him a good bat in time for the summer term."

"H'm," said Garnett.

"And for goodness' sake don't forget that for these few weeks' you're to be known as Billy Garnett. If you let out the truth, I'll —I'll never speak to you again."

"H'm," said Garnett again.

"Don't keep on saying that; it sounds silly. I'm interested in him—I want to see the school proud of him. At present he's he laughing stock of the place. I've lowered my pride and asked you to help—I want you to show that you really *are* my pal. You needn't spend the whole day with him—the Turners want you to play golf, and Mr. Mason will motor you all over the place, and——"

"Yes," said Garnett; "I shall like that. As a disciple of the country squire I am without compare."

"I dare say. Well you'll have to pay your way by coaching Roscoe."

"What are the arrangements? What do I do? Just say, 'Little boy, will you come on to the heath with bat and ball?' or do I keep on following him about practising off drives with a walking-stick till he goes mad?"

"You've brought your cricket things?"

"Yes; I hope to get a game or two, and I shall put in some practice at the school. Kirby'll shove up a net for me."

"That's it, then. You'll take him to the net every morning and afternoon unless I allow you time off, and coach him."

"Fielding practice?"

"I suppose so."

"Good. I shall enjoy that."

"Well, is it the right thing?"

"Undoubtedly. You slog balls into the middle distance, and the man you're coaching is supposed to field 'em or chase 'em into the forest."

"Very well. But I really want you to teach him to bat."

"Girls always want people to bat. Why shouldn't he bowl or keep wicket? It's easier to teach that very often than to make a good bat out of a rabbit."

"I *want* him to bat," said Barbara, again. "I want him to play for his house more than for the school. It's Laing's house, and they want batsmen. They've got one or two bowlers."

"Here he comes," remarked Garnett. "Reminds me of a thing I used to dream of in nightmares."

"That's not funny," said Barbara, severely.

"Certainly not," said Garnett. "It's your find that's funny. All right, I'll make him a terror. I hear," he went on, as Roscoe came up, "that we're going to have a little cricket practice together."

"Barbara," admitted Roscoe, apologetically, "wants me to take it up. She said you'd teach me."

"Pleasure," said Garnett, swishing at another blade of grass with his club. "We'll go over to the school to-day and badger the groundsman to shove up a net for us."

"Yes," said Roscoe, and looked appealingly at Barbara.

Barbara nodded vivaciously.

"I'm so glad you're going to start," she said. "I shall come over to watch you."

She looked at him with a sort of sisterly interest. In her mind's eye she foresaw Roscoe made into a man—at her direction. He had interested her, and had appealed to the outdoor instincts that were so prominent a part of her. She saw in him a raw youth to convert; had started on a course of verbal tuition, trying to make him see the glory of games, and the splendour of being a boy. Surprised from the first at his lack of interest in the school, she had become used, after a time, to his warped point of view, and had set to work to alter it. She herself was only really happy when out in the open. In a boy she looked always for her ideal points, and hero-worshipped those in whom she found them, so that in Roscoe she had met with an entirely unprecedented case.

Here was a boy, who to all appearances was not a boy. Her pity was aroused first, then her energy and her gift of enthusiasm, Almost like a child with a new toy she delighted in Roscoe as a boy whom she could "make." She had started at once to show him the pitiful folly of his ways. At last she thought she had made him understand. Now with the convenient arrival of the holidays she had summoned "Garnett's" aid, for at the back of her head was a great idea of which the sensational *début* of Roscoe as a sportsman formed the basis. At first Garnett had demurred; then in his good-natured way he had promised to come and help. Now that he saw Roscoe for the

first time he marvelled at Barbara's eccentricity, but his promise was given, and with a philosophical resignation he turned to his job of making a bat out of a maggot. Naturalists would have declared the feat impossible. Nevertheless, with Barbara's enthusiastic gratitude egging him on, Garnett set to work.

CHAPTER XXIV

WITH AN AUDIENCE OF TWO

TWELVE hours later "Billy Garnett" stood at the bowler's end of a solitary Harley net kindly erected by the groundsman in honour of his visit to the locality. Toying with a worn red ball, he spoke smooth technical words of advice to Roscoe, who stood before his three stumps holding his bat club fashion, looking (and feeling) a fool.

"Try and not pull so much," said he. "You're playing bang across the wicket, you see. The great thing is to keep your eye on the ball, and learn to keep your bat straight. A good bat is an intelligent machine. There is a stroke for every ball. I can teach you the strokes and help you practise them. All you've got to do for yourself is to pick the balls and apply the right stroke; to learn to time the pace of the wicket, and to get your wrists supple and your shoulders loose."

"I see," said Roscoe, which he did not.

"Now don't wait till the ball's almost on your bat before you lift it, or you'll send up a catch. Get your bat ready, feel springy on your toes; then play your stroke. At first you'll keep on getting bowled. Don't mind that. You'll soon learn to time the ball, and then you'll start scoring runs. Above all, remember that stylish strokes have *got* to be played with the wrists. Don't get cramped. Now just loosen your limbs a bit before I start bowling again. Swing your bat about a bit. Try the feel of the turf with your boots. Take guard. Now, I'm going to send down six balls to play back to, and six to come forward at, so that you'll know where you are. Then I'll mix 'em a bit. Ready? Yes, that's centre. Play."

When he had been bowled three times in four balls, Roscoe dropped his pose, and holding his bat in his two hands looked at Garnett disconsolately.

"I'm afraid I'm no good," said he.

"Don't be a fool!" said Garnett. "Play."

Barbara, who was standing by Garnett, smiled encouragingly upon him.

"You've got a style already," said she. "Anybody can hit the ball, but you can't make runs regularly unless you've got a style, and to get that you must expect to be bowled a good deal at first. Billy's told me that. Haven't you, Billy?"

"Yes. Ready, Roscoe?"

Roscoe gave another furtive dig at the grave which he associated in some mysterious way with the word "Centre," and said that he was.

Kirby, the groundsman, was watching, too, and when Roscoe at last retired from the wicket he remarked to the Maggot that he had never seen him at the nets before.

"No," said James; "I'm going to play next term, though."

"You've got a mighty good coach," said Kirby. "Not many boys can get Mr. ——" Just in time he remembered that he was in Barbara's secret. "Mr. Garnett," he added, hastily, "to teach him the game. You're lucky."

Roscoe nodded solemnly.

That afternoon he accidentally lifted a ball into the country to a distance from which it took Garnett thirty seconds to recover it.

"Good!" he said when at last he trotted back. "That would have counted four. *Now* you're starting."

Roscoe was bowled next ball; but he had known the glorious feeling of a ball well lifted, and from the moment of that first big drive he felt strangely confident. He played more naturally, bringing the power of his shoulders into his forward strokes, learning neatness in his back-play. Day by day Garnett talked to him patiently. Soon he was himself as interested in his pupil as was Barbara. He began to feel that when at last Roscoe's *début* came a little kudos might fall in secret to his lot. As James improved, as he brought his intelligence to bear in making his strokes, Billy nodded approvingly, and bowled, by degrees, a little better at each innings. Presently a week had gone by. Then there were also times for fielding practice; half-hours when Garnett skied balls to Roscoe a hundred yards away, or drove them along the green carpet of the Harley playing fields, for James to field and return. And Roscoe, apathetic at first, became in due course immoderately keen. He found himself driving balls hard past Garnett's feet, or playing them carefully if they seemed tricky.

The sunny spring weather brought something of the cricket fever into his spirit. He began to look forward to the hours during which he stood up to Garnett's bowling. He liked the considerate way in which this man, whom

Kirby seemed to know as a brilliant batsman, gave his tips. There was no suggestion of vaunted power in his manner. He just seemed anxious to help, and he never once smiled if Roscoe missed the ball by a yard or so.

Roscoe appreciated this sympathy and tried very hard; and a trier is a good man to teach.

Sometimes there were wet days for a spell, and practice had to be knocked off. Occasionally Garnett went off with friends for golf or motoring, and Roscoe was left alone with Barbara, who took his place and bowled lobs to the Maggot with patience and some skill.

In those holidays the change in Roscoe became more and more settled. No amount of medicine can bridge the difference between a sick man who wants to get well and another who does not. In the same way no amount of teaching could have made Roscoe good at cricket when he had no desire to be good. At school he had felt prejudiced against all sport, subtly convinced that he could never be any good at all at any games. So, since he had no ambition that way, he had never tried his hand. Now his point of view had changed. He saw now not what he could *not* do, but what he could. He reasoned that after all he might have a chance—one never knew. Barbara encouraged him. He became keen, which he had never been before in his life; he saw that there was a way in which he could "make good" with Barbara; and this and Garnett's infectious enthusiasm and perfect style, made him so hopeful that he tried as hard as any pupil could possibly have tried. And as the summer term drew near he grew more confident. He became used to Garnett's bowling, and found that often he could play very many balls without being bowled, and since Garnett was bowling well, the Maggot discovered that, when Barbara took a turn with her lobs, he could hit out at them with confidence. Garnett taught him how to hit, and, with a happy feeling that he was doing well, Roscoe picked up his coach's tips and applied them to the right balls. Sometimes Kirby came to the net and took a hand with the bowling, and when Roscoe had overcome his nervousness at the first few balls he found that he could play them even more vigorously than he could Garnett's, and Kirby nodded approvingly.

"Who would have thought it?" he said. "In three weeks! Marvellous, *I* call it!"

Then at last the holidays were almost over, and Garnett left.

"See you again soon, I expect," he said, as he shook Roscoe's hand. "I shall come down and watch you whirling your bat for the school next term. Keep your form up."

Roscoe smiled gratefully. In the last few weeks he had forgotten to be surly. His smile, once sardonic, had become almost sunny. He looked forward to the coming term hopefully, anxious to show that Barbara's interest had not been misplaced.

He shook Garnett's hand warmly, and began to thank him in terms more boyish than would have seemed possible in Roscoe a few weeks before.

"It's been awfully decent of you," he said. "You've helped me tons. I don't know why you should. I must have been an awful goat to teach. I mean——"

Garnett said "Not at all" hurriedly, and picked up his bag.

He had a few minutes' talk to Barbara before he left.

"Till Saturday week," said she, mysteriously, as she bade him good-bye.

Garnett nodded solemnly.

"I'm almost as keen as you are now," said he. "It'll be rather good sport—yes; till Saturday week."

CHAPTER XXV

ROSCOE'S CHANCE

A DAY or so later the summer term started at Harley, and Roscoe, a little miserable but very keen, left "Westholme" and went back to Godwin's. Here his own hopefulness seemed to be shared by others. The junior Godwinkles all seemed to be looking forward to the good things that this term was to bring them, such was their reliance in Laing. There was, of course, the usual handful of malcontents, cronies of Menzies, who "couldn't understand all this pesty excitement among the kids," but their opinions were beginning to carry less weight than before. There was ambition in the air. And, most of all, Laing, with Symington smiling mildly at his right hand, looked forward to the summer.

On the second day of term Roscoe overheard a discussion in the junior common-room.

"Who'll play for the first on Saturday?" asked one, Merryweather.

"Well," said another, "they always start with the old colours and the senior men of the Second. Wonder who Benham's bringing down?"

"I like to see Benham bat," said another, ecstatically. "Hope he makes about fifty-three."

"He generally brings down some 'Varsity people," observed Merryweather, "and a county man or so, and a lot of O.H.'s. They beat the school last year. I think it's a silly idea to start off with a hot-stuff game like that."

"Oh, I don't know," said another boy. "They aren't in form yet any more than we are, and they'll probably have a pretty long tail. They look rather frightful on paper, but we might easily whack 'em. They don't get any practice before the game, you see."

R. J. Benham was one of the most popular Old Harleyans of modern times. He was a double blue at Oxford, and had played cricket for the Gentlemen, and twice for England, whilst at Rugger he had for two years been one of the half-dozen three-quarters from whom the Press annually recommended the Selection Committee to make their choice, without having yet been capped. Constantly in the public eye, however, he was a man whose doings in the world of sport were keenly followed by all Harleyans. Here and there a boy, boasting friendship with Benham, would become an object of awe with the rest of the junior school, whilst most of the older fellows had some pet story concerning his prowess in the field. Since leaving Harley three years ago, he had annually brought down a scratch team to play the school their opening matches at both Rugger and cricket, but as he lived somewhere up North, he was seldom seen for the rest of the year, unless he was able to attend occasional school functions. Roscoe, therefore, had never yet seen this hero, and with his new-born keenness glowing within him he made inquiries about the match, being jeered at for his trouble.

"Never seen Benham?" said one. "Pshaw! Don't wonder. Probably don't know what cricket and Rugger are. Ever heard of a three-quarter? Well, Benham's one. But it's no good telling you. You wouldn't understand. You're a maggot."

Roscoe refrained from any heated retorts, but he secretly made up his mind to be on the field when this match took place. One boy had said he loved to see Benham bat.

"Come here a minute, will you?" said the visiting captain, and Roscoe nervously approached the group.

Perhaps Roscoe might pick up a few new tips from his style.

Saturday was a whole holiday at Harley, so when the day came he made for the pavilion in good time. The sun was shining cheerfully. One or two strangers in brilliant blazers were patting balls about in front of a screen. Laing, in the sober school colours, was standing on the steps with a few Harleyans round him. A fair sprinkling of visitors lent some colour to the crowd of Harleyans, but as a rule it was not until the afternoon that the nobility of the countryside turned up in force. He looked

for Barbara, but neither she nor Mrs. North seemed to be on the ground as yet.

Then he wandered around with a touch of his old vacancy, and felt a little lonely.

Presently he sat down on a bench, and almost at once he heard a boy behind him say :—

" Hullo, there's Benham."

He looked up with interest, wondering which was the great man, and the first person that he saw—with a sudden jump of delight—was Garnett. He got to his feet, then sat down again hesitatingly. Garnett had a number of other men with him, and Roscoe felt rather ignominious in this galaxy of talent. He sat modestly on his bench beside a fat boy who partially hid him from view, and waited for a chance to attract Garnett's attention. Then it occurred to him that Garnett himself must be playing, and he thought that this was good. He would see his coach in a real match—again good. Then as he waited he heard Garnett call to Laing.

" Sorry, Laing," he said. " We're a man short."

" That's all right," said Laing, coming towards him ; " you count as two."

" We shall therefore," continued Garnett, " be glad of a superior style of sub."

Roscoe sat and wondered. This was Benham's team. Why was Garnett taking things in hand like this ? Was Benham away ? No, another boy had just seen him. He glued his eyes upon the group.

" Oh, you would, would you ? " said Laing. " Who would you like—our improved imitation of Hobbs—Mr. Laing ? "

" No," said Garnett ; " there is a man here that I met in the holidays. I should like him. He is a batsman of bright promise. I should like to bring him to your bloated notice—a man called Roscoe."

The Maggot stiffened where he sat, as if electrocuted ; his eyes bulged with amazement. " *What !* " his look seemed to say.

Laing, too, seemed startled.

" *Who ?* "

" Roscoe. R-O-S, with a ' Ros,' C-O-E, with a ' Coe '—Roscoe."

" You're making some mistake," said Laing. " Roscoe doesn't play cricket."

" Roscoe is a clever boy," said Garnett. " He can play anything."

" Any good on the mouth organ ? " inquired Rick, joining the group.

" I suppose," said Laing, " there's a joke *somewhere*. Tell us what it is. Let's all share in it."

At that moment Garnett, looking round, caught Roscoe's bulging eye staring at him as if he had seen countless phenomena in all directions.

" Hullo, there he is," said he. " What cheer, Roscoe ? Come here a minute, will you ? "

Roscoe, with a sensation something akin to that of a nervous youth being called upon to assist a conjuror at a crowded music-hall, and stumbling from the back row of the pit to the stage, came up to the group of " bloods."

" Look here," said Garnett, affably, " I'm a man short. Would you mind turning out for my side ? "

Roscoe strove to untie some of the knots in his tongue, and failed dismally. He gurgled, coughed, nodded his head dazedly.

He dimly guessed that, somehow, Barbara's hand had wrought this miracle, realised that he was supposed to step in and play his part. He seemed to be watching himself as if he had become an automaton. He looked appealingly at Garnett.

" Isn't Benham here ? " he said.

Laing grinned.

" I thought you said you *knew* him ? " he said to Garnett.

" Just so, but I am a man of many parts. Here I am known as Benham ; my nephew, aged three, fails to recognise in me anybody but ' unko ' ; London, on the other hand, welcomes me as King Nebuchadnezzar ; Roscoe as Garnett, with the prefix ' Mr.' "

Laing stood with his hands on his hips and regarded Garnett with solemn disapproval.

" What *is* the joke ? " he said, plaintively.

" Shall we," said Garnett, " toss for innings ? "

" No," said Laing ; " tell us the joke."

" I think," said Garnett, firmly, " that we will toss. Then I can take Roscoe away from you all, and he and I will have a small, quiet chat together, smoothing over all the little nobbly points that have cropped up in this affair."

At this point Weldon came up, chewing grass.

" Move along, please," he said. " I wish to take this ball and this bat and endeavour to break the school clock, and you're bang in the light."

" Wait," said Laing. " The biggest sensation of the year is about to burst upon Harley."

" Better go home for an umbrella," said Weldon.

" Roscoe," continued Laing, " is going to play cricket against the first."

Weldon stopped chewing grass and looked at

Laing. The last five minutes had been occupied by people looking at each other fixedly; now Garnett applied the closure.

"Come on," said he; "call to this," and spun a coin.

"Heads," said Laing.

"Your guess is most accurate," said Garnett. "Shall we take first knock?"

"No," said Laing, "I thank you."

"Right," said Garnett. Then he turned to Roscoe again. "Come over and find Barbara," said he, quietly, "and don't look so terror-stricken, old boy; you'll give the whole show away."

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CHAPTER XXVI

ROSCOE PERFORMS

WITH Benham's big hand gripping his arm in friendly fashion, Roscoe felt a little more at home; his coach's cheery voice reassured him.

"It's all right," said he, "don't lose your head. This is the grand finale of Barbara's idea."

The Maggot looked up at him nervously, uncertain what was expected of him.

"Barbara was working for this all the time," said Benham. "It was her scheme that I should turn up one short and claim you. We—er—we hope you'll knock up a few and show 'em what you really are made of. That's why she let you think I was called Garnett, too. You mustn't think we were making a fool of you. She meant to make you take up cricket just because you felt you'd like to; if you'd known who I was you might have thought you'd do it so that I could help you a bit afterwards, or p'r'aps so as to—er—swank who you'd played with, if you understand what I mean. It was her idea," he added, uncomfortably, "not mine. You don't mind playing to-day, do you?"

With any other boy Benham would never have thought of asking whether he "minded" playing. The honour of being chosen to play for a good team against the school would have left no doubt as to whether the chosen one was pleased. But with Roscoe it was different. Benham realised that he was bringing what would be considered a stupid humour-lacking element into the fixture, and that he would be creating a sensation by his selection of a sub. He hated to figure in sensations, and he guessed that Roscoe did too. Besides, the youngster was probably desperately nervous.

"I'd rather not," said James.

"Nonsense—why not?"

"I shall make an utter fool of myself."

"Oh, no, you won't. Barbara's coming to cheer you up. Keep your head, old chap, and you'll do great things. There she is, look, over there with Mrs. North."

In the distance a girlish figure was just entering the ground. He stood beside the great Benham and felt small and foolish, obsessed with something of the awed helplessness of an inexperienced prisoner at the bar, nor could he help wondering whether his one pair of white trousers were clean. The thought that he had no proper cricket outfit eventually lodged in his head and he muttered it to Benham.

The great man nodded understandingly, said that it was all right, and promised to see that Roscoe was suitably rigged out.

"I've got almost as interested in you as Barbara is," he said. "I'm going to be proud of you to-day."

Then the little lady who had worked it all came up smiling cheerfully, with Mrs. North.

"You're going to play?" she said, eagerly, to Roscoe.

Roscoe murmured unintelligible phrases indicating deep melancholy.

"Cheer up," said Barbara, "and make lots of uns—to please me."

"Don't keep on asking him to make runs," said Benham, "or he won't get any at all. Tell him to field decently and feel keen right through."

Roscoe strove to smile.

For him this was by no means Young Life's Bright Day—he just loathed it.

Mrs. North patted him heartily upon the back.

"We knew you were the right sort when we first met you," said she. "We shouldn't have asked *any* boy to stay with us for three weeks, especially when we scarcely knew him. But you see we sympathised. Nobody seemed to understand you. I think we can still sympathise, can't we? You'll be glad when it's all over, eh? Well, I expect you'll be glad you played, too. It'll mean a lot to you afterwards."

"Rather!" said Garnett. "It's no end of an opening."

* * * * *

News of this kind spreads through a school rather more rapidly than an electric shock through the body. It "fetches 'em," too. Boys who had not been over keen to watch the match came up at a lively pace excessively grateful not to have missed the Great Event.

Patriarchs of nineteen not yet in the First strolled up with books under their arms asking other onlookers which exactly *was* Roscoe. Masters smiled thoughtfully. Kirby, the groundsman, busied himself with bats, balls, and screens, and gave away no secrets. Various youths who considered themselves "twelfth men," asked each other indignantly why they had not been asked to play; and after cogitation drew attention to their thankfulness at not having been, since "no decent chap wanted to play *against* the school."

Throughout these preparations Roscoe was conspicuous by his absence. Eventually he came up with Benham, suitably clad, very awed, and very silent. A few minutes later, Benham's eleven took the field. In the rear of the team strolled Rick and Winter, swinging their bats carelessly. The sun was no longer shining.

Roscoe, whose fielding practice with Benham had mostly been of an out-field nature, was deputed to adorn the "country" and "long leg" respectively. He was also asked to do so as well as he could to stop drives neatly, heels together, and to make every effort to secure any catches that came his way.

His position in the field having been pointed out by knowing onlookers to other onlookers, and having been discussed exhaustively by Godwinkles and friends, play began, and simultaneously Roscoe settled down to wish more heartily than ever before in his life that he had been born under other circumstances —preferably on a small deserted island in mid-Atlantic.

After a time the sound of bat meeting ball ceased to have quite the same hideously alarming effect upon him as had the first few strokes. He realised by degrees that every ball hit was not necessarily propelled by some mysterious force towards his own clumsy hands. For a quarter of an hour, indeed, it never journeyed his way at all. Then at last, well driven, it came skimming along the green carpet between himself and the wickets, hopping and skipping, yet straight and hard and fast. He forgot to run forward, and, stopping still, forgot to close his heels or to put his hands down smartly and make a neat save. For the moment he forgot everything except that the ball was coming at him viciously. As it arrived, it gave a sudden skip, knee-high, and Roscoe, diving at it like a kitten at a ball of worsted, found that it merely bit at his finger, leaving it numbed, and then ran on merrily into the distance. Next he saw the umpire making some peculiar sign with his hand; just in time, too, he realised that he was supposed to fetch the ball, and he ran after it with a solemn dignity born of acute self-consciousness.

But that one experience, terrible though it was, proved a great help. It recalled his scattered senses; he remembered that Benham's drives in the holidays had come to him in just the same way, and he recollected, too, how he had learned to stop them and return the ball swiftly to Benham. He tried to think that, after all, these drives were no different. They could be treated in just the same fearless manner. Soon he almost hoped that another would come his way that he might make good in this matter of fielding, and justify Benham's confidence in him. But the next big hit was out of his reach although he ran for it determinedly, and the third sailed high over his head in an annoyingly cocksure manner. Not until four men had been sent back to the pavilion, and the score-board registered ninety-five runs, did he have his chance. This time the ball seemed to be coming in a perfect straight line to him from the batsman. He crouched on his heels and waited. Then it shot briskly into the pocket he had made of his hands, bounced out again, and rolled some yards away. He dived at it irritably, and returned it to the bowler. He could at all events throw properly. Benham had taught him that effectively. Other hits came his way as the game proceeded, but no catches that he could hope to reach. Sometimes, when the over made him "long-leg," he found the ball shooting away from the batsman at a terrific pace just when he was least expecting it, and this annoying custom kept him wide awake.

As the wickets fell he almost began to hope that he was making himself appear that which he had heard described as a "bit of a buck." He could not guess what bit of the buck he would most remind people of, but he was conscious of a glowing hope that he was somehow avenging past insults in the hearts of the Godwinkles. He tried to imagine their annoyance at finding him chosen to stand out, a prominent figure in the landscape, and stop balls slogged at his head by other older established bucks. He liked to think that Menzies for one would be annoyed—Menzies who, so he had understood, was a snake of some standing amongst his fellow-snakes, and in no way a true buck.

The luncheon interval stopped his soliloquies, and he found himself ambling back towards the pavilion at the tail-end of a flannelled crocodile.

Benham waited for him and clapped him heavily on the shoulder.

"Good!" he said, enthusiastically. "You stopped some of those like a pro. You'll do. I expect Barbara's singing the National Anthems of ten countries at once, and making you a daisy chain into the bargain. Come in and put on a coat and we'll just give 'em an affable nod as we go over to lunch."

"We were just going home to dinner," said Barbara, as they came up, "but I think I'm too excited to eat anything. Isn't he fine?"

"As fine as a needle," said Benham. "Sharp, too. He's just coming over to share a bullock with me. You can go home and dig out the old dusty laurel-wreath. You'll want it to-day."

Lunch, as is so often the case, proving too much for the Harley "tail," the last pair of school batsmen left the wicket an hour after the resumption with the big board staring at them gloatingly from beside the pavilion, flaunting the strange device, 172—10, and a large o which, in the opinion of Lancaster, at whom it jeered, bulged unnecessarily.

Then began an attack of real nervousness such as Roscoe had never before experienced. The memory of his loneliness when he had first gone out to field faded away into obscurity, a long-forgotten childish nightmare. Now his coming ordeal loomed before him with the disproportionate intensity of a great "yawning tier of guns" gazing down ominously at a crippled fly. He dared scarcely think of the time, now swiftly approaching, when he, like these other batsmen, must step casually from the pavilion, padded and gloved.

"I shall put you in about sixth wicket," Benham had said. "That'll give you time to get comfortable in your mind."

The reverse was the case. It merely gave him time to appreciate what he supposed to be the feelings of a man who loses his nerve on the scaffold. His view of things became hopelessly distorted; he might almost have been watching the game through a comic mirror. Benham went out to bat at the fall of the first wicket, and Roscoe tried to pull himself together and watch his skill. But though he followed almost every movement of his coach as he met each ball, he could not enjoy his play or appreciate his style. He watched dazedly. Each ball seemed to be bowled at *him*. His heart jumped six times an over as Benham or his partner drove it back, or snicked it artistically through the slips. He sat alone in the pavilion and nobody talked to him save occasional members of Benham's team, who asked him imbecile questions about the school. Godwinkles and awed juniors passed in front of him and gazed fixedly at his features as if striving to commit them to memory for life. Some called to him, o hers merely grinned. But all, he noticed, seemed a little less domineering; in fact, rather more respectful to him than hitherto. But this fact was of no help. The pitch held his attention magnetically. He began to know just how many steps each bowler took to the wicket. Then suddenly a man would be out, and Roscoe would watch his features intently as he came back to the pavilion, noticing how he took these things. And all the time his heart punched his ribs, and his throat begged to him for water, and his hands shook slightly, no matter where he put them.

Then the fifth man was out, and somebody told him to get on his pads. Benham was still batting, and Roscoe hoped against hope that he would not be the next man out. He felt that somehow his friendly greatness would be some slight help to him when he got out on to that green patch between wickets and stood up to the school bowlers.

For the time he forgot Barbara and Mrs. North, and not for anything in the world would he have spoken to them before he went out to bat. His nerves seemed held together by the slenderest of threads that one incautious touch would snap.

There were little tingling points of perspiration on his forehead as he bent down to unstrap a pad which he found he had put on the wrong leg. A sympathetic man with a bald head and a blazer came over and assisted him, suggesting also with a "hail fellow, well met" manner the best way of wearing batting gloves. Then Roscoe sat and waited.

Reader, your sympathy for the man in a funk.

A sudden crack, a burst of applause, scattered stumps, a tall fellow returning humbly to the pavilion. Roscoe stood up, bat in hand, and looked out on to the green field with its figures in white, some talking together, some picking grass, others calling attention to their anxiety to catch the ball if the man in possession would be so kind as to throw it "Here!"

As the sixth man out came home in disgust, Roscoe stepped out of the pavilion and started to walk in what seemed to him jerky discomfort towards the wicket. Somewhere there was a faint clapping of hands; here and there a few people took it up half-heartedly. He

guessed that Barbara had led the way, but dared not look in her direction. Some of the fielders nodded to him affably, Laing amongst them.

Benham came towards him, his cheery face one vast grin.

"*You're* all right," he said, breezily; "the bowling's sheer tosh. If you can play mine, you can slog this right over the village. Keep a straight bat and take time to play yourself in. No, that's your end, old chap."

Roscoe wandered down the pitch, placed his bat in the little grave where men had been taking "centre," and made it clear that he was ready. His nerve-thread was stretched to its uttermost.

"D'you want centre?" inquired the umpire.

"Eh?" said Roscoe.

"D'you want centre, sir?"

Roscoe held his bat straight and looked inquiringly at this annoying man in white.

"That's middle and leg."

Roscoe again turned his bat. Once more he was ready. Weldon was bowling. He gave Roscoe a friendly smile, turned and took a few steps back, twisting the ball about in his hands. Then Roscoe saw him stop. He ground his heel into the turf, glanced round the field, waved a few men closer in. Then, arms loose by his side, he started his run. Roscoe saw his hand above his head, saw a red ball swinging towards him. Forgetting all his tuition, he swung his bat inanely.

"*Come* on!" shouted Benham. The ball was spinning away past mid-on; his coach was running down the pitch to meet him. Roscoe ran too.

"Over," observed the umpire.

The Maggot's nervousness suddenly dwindled away a little; he felt himself a proven buck. He had scored a run. He tried to imagine himself back in a net, with Benham bowling for an hour at a stretch. Then he took guard again—properly. He noticed that Mason was bowling this time. The hurried thoughts that crowded his head like people passing into a tube lift at the busy hour brought home to him all that his success in this match might mean. Under Barbara's influence he had grown suddenly anxious to make good. He had seen the aptitude of his nickname, and felt the necessity of shaking off his bad reputation. Barbara wanted him to, and he respected Barbara.

He faced Mason more confidently. Again he saw the swinging arm—the spinning ball, a ball that hit the ground and shot away from him temptingly. He whirled his bat at it. There was a faint click, a soft "pad" behind, and a terrifying "Zat!" from the field in general and the wicket-keeper in particular. Horror-struck he looked wonderingly at the umpire, who was solemnly raising his hand above his head.

"Hard luck," said the wicket-keeper, generously.

Benham smiled sympathetically from his wicket and murmured some soft word of condolence. Roscoe hesitated, and then turned. It seemed a long way back to the pavilion. The men who lounged there were mere dots. He wanted to run like a hare, but he walked soberly. Again there was a faint clapping. This time it was not even taken up. He drew nearer to the pavilion. All the hopes that had reared themselves before his mind's eye after that first ball were now crumbling about him. At each step he seemed to be grinding underfoot something great that he had meant to do Then at last he was back, and the next man was there putting on his gloves hopefully. Roscoe slouched in, and disappeared sorrowfully into the changing room where he sat, silent, miserable, ashamed, until Benham coming in half an hour later, caught in the country for seventy-seven, found him, and took him out almost by sheer force to Barbara.

Never had he felt more strangely distant from buckhood as he did when Benham, leading him up to his girl chum, gave him a friendly punch on the back as they met.

"There he is," said he. "I hope you're satisfied. I am. Now that he's broken the ice he'll soon be the idol of the school."

Roscoe shifted his feet, uncertain whether his coach was jeering or not.

Barbara looked at him happily.

Your outdoor girl has a way all her own of making the famous athlete humble, or the unknown trier feel worthy a chance in the team nearest his heart. She has an ineffusive way of congratulating prowess, a sympathetic, understanding manner of "not noticing flaws and failures." Barbara brought all her art into action.

Roscoe, though vastly humbled, nevertheless felt satisfied. It was obvious that in the eyes of these his friends he was no longer despicable. He looked down the avenue that was opening up before his mind's eye and saw prospects of good times, opportunities of earning praise from Harley.

He was a changed character.

CHAPTER XXVII

SENSATION

WHEN Barbara sat alone with Mrs. North that evening discussing Roscoe, a sorrowful thought occurred to her.

"Doesn't it seem wretched," said she, "that he'll have to go back in the summer holidays to his uncle who won't understand him any more than he did before, and who'll probably undo most of the good we've done?"

"It is rather hard luck," said Mrs. North. "But we couldn't very well have him here again, and anyway I expect he'll be sufficiently changed by the time the holidays come to be able to hold his own."

"Do you really think so, auntie?"

"Sure of it," said Mrs. North.

Roscoe was sure too.

Except for the fact that he too could not help thinking of his uncle's evil ways, he did not see how things could very well go wrong in the future. For one thing, Laing had come to him after the match and asked him why he had said that he did not play cricket. Roscoe had explained that he had only just taken up the game—in the holidays, with Benham.

"Well, anyway," Laing had said, "I'm jolly glad. We shall look to you to wire in for the Old House this term. From what you've done to-day you look quite promising. Keep up practice."

Then, again, many juniors, too ready at one time to torment him, came now very nearly extending the open hand. He knew Benham; Benham had taught him cricket; he had batted against the first; he was not such a bad chap after all when you knew him.

Masters, too—all, that is to say, except Mr. Godwin, who had not yet heard of the happenings in which Roscoe had played his conspicuous part—looked upon the Maggot in a new light. They decided that the boy they had thought a black sheep was merely a dark horse, misunderstood, perhaps, and they treated him accordingly.

"Here he is," said Benham, thumping Roscoe on the back. "I hope you're satisfied, Barbara, because I am."

But the man who has sudden greatness thrust upon him must go warily. Very often Dame Fortune, realising too late that she has been strangely liberal in her helping, endeavours to get some of her own back by extracting payment. Another way of putting this was found by the gentleman who asserted, reasonably enough, that there is no pleasure without its pain.

Roscoe's pain, which came in his hour of

halo-claiming suddenly, sharply, and with a sickening thud, was led up to in this wise:—

On the morning of the Tuesday following the match in which Roscoe had taken part, startling news came to the school and was gabbled from mouth to mouth with a rapidity commonly supposed to be attained only by washerwomen.

Laing was one of the first to hear of it. Afterwards walking along a corridor in Godwin's he was spotted by an excited Godwinkle who was looking frenziedly for someone to tell, and, seeing Laing, came up at the double, anxious for the honour of imparting his news to so great a personage.

"'Ve you heard, Laing?" said he.

Laing looked at him without interest.

"It is possible that I might," said he, "if you told me."

"I mean," said the other, "about the fire. Old Mother Kent's, you know—in the village. Burnt out, they say—been a fire."

"A fire?" said Laing. "At old Mother Kent's?"

"Burnt to the ground, I believe. I shall go down and have a look this evening."

"Great Scott," said Laing. "Really? Put on a clean collar." Having said which he raised his eyebrows in a manner indicating restrained surprise, and passed on.

The other Godwinkle hurried away with his news. Within a quarter of an hour, the whole school had heard, Roscoe included. There is always an appetite for sensation at school, and Harleyans fairly gloated over the news. Mrs. Kent was not over popular, and rumour had it that her shop was insured. These facts cleared the school's conscience, so to speak, and permitted them free rein to enjoy the excitement. Some hurried down to the scene of devastation at the earliest opportunity and came back with wondrous tales of twisted bars of iron, piles of charred wood, grim relics of household gods. Some had seen Mrs. Kent herself, and gave pathetic accounts of the sad story she was telling to sympathetic onlookers. Roscoe's own feelings were mixed. It was not to be wondered at that in his heart his hatred of Mrs. Kent was strong and well nourished. Time and again he had wished her all the misfortune that could possibly come her way; he had longed for the day when *he* might be top dog in their virulent dispute, the great thing that had sprung from the small beginning of a pilfered bar of chocolate. He would have felt justified had he cheered loudly and unceasingly on receipt of the news of her heavy blow. Yet, as is so often the case, now that Fate's pendulum had swung favourably for him, he was conscious of no particular joy. To crow over such an event seemed like hitting a man—a woman, shall we say—who was down. His character had suffered drastic changes of late, and his inclination was to stand aside in solemn silence, rather than to gloat. He thought over this matter all day. He wondered at times why he was not excessively glad. One could not very well expect him to be sincerely sorry for Mrs. Kent, but many were less sympathetic than he.

You must not think that this was Fate's way of charging Roscoe for favours bestowed; there was no pain in this news—Roscoe's share in the incident was yet to come.

That evening he was sent for by Laing. He answered the call, easy enough in his conscience, merely supposing that he was wanted in reference to games. Yet, once inside the study, it struck him that something was wrong. Laing was alone, and there was mystery in his serious expression and in the almost uncanny stillness in the room. Laing nodded his head in the direction of his table.

"Roscoe," said he, "what do you know about that?"

The Maggot looked. On the table lay a soiled handkerchief; part of it was scorched. When Roscoe took it up he noticed that it was also greasy and smelt very slightly of oil.

"What is it?" he asked.

"It's a handkerchief," said Laing, "and it's got your name on the corner."

"Eh!" said Roscoe, "*my* name?"

"Look at it."

Roscoe took it up, and examined the edge. He paled slightly, not quite understanding what it all meant. His conscience was still perfectly clear. He knew nothing wrong that he had done. But Laing misunderstood. Watching Roscoe he saw that the Maggot was clearly ill at ease, and he took too much for granted.

"I suppose you know where it was found?"

Roscoe looked up, a little frightened.

"I don't know anything about it. It's got my name on, but I don't know why it's here, or what you mean, or why——"

"Menzies found it," said Laing. "He was down at the ruins of Mrs. Kent's place, having a look round. He picked up this, and when he found that it had your name on, he brought it to me. I suppose you know that they think the shop was set on by fire by an—an incendiary. Mrs. Kent was out when it caught

alight. There was no fire in the house—nothing that can have set light to the place. Here and there they're supposed to have found traces of spilled oil. This handkerchief—you see what it's like—I——" he hesitated.

Roscoe stood before him dumfounded. He could find nothing to say; at last he muttered to himself under his breath.

"What d'you say?" said Laing.

"I don't know what you mean," said Roscoe. "I don't know anything about it. I must have been in school when it happened."

"It was in the evening," said Laing. "People in Godwin's have a knack of getting out of the house whenever they like. It's not my place to charge you with anything. Still, there it is. You say you know nothing about it?"

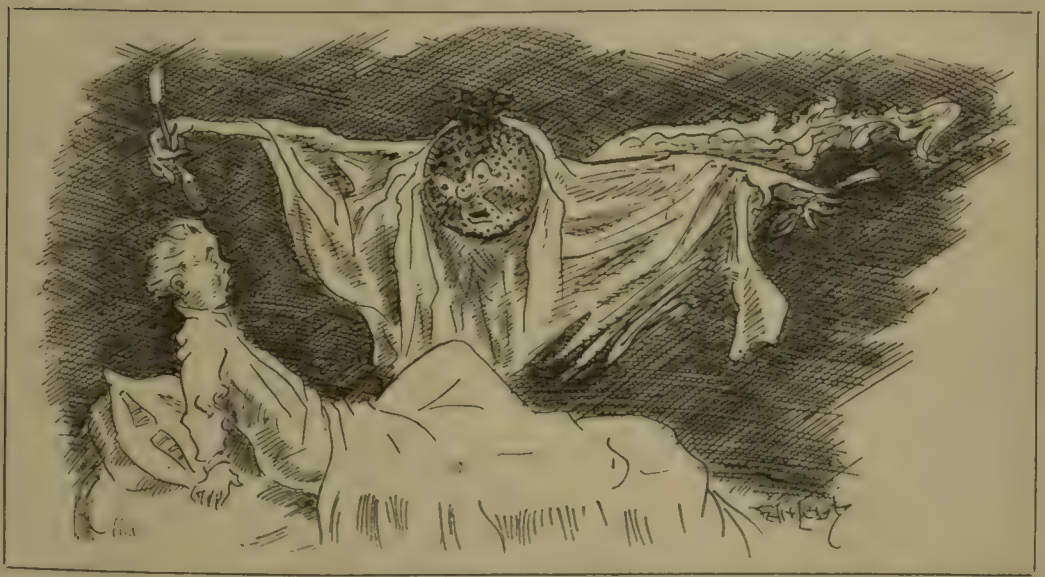
Roscoe shook his head in bewilderment.

"Menzies has told me," said Laing, "that you had a grudge against Mrs. Kent about that chocolate affair in the Christmas term. It seems more than probable. He says you had been getting a bit desperate. I don't know how he heard about it, because I told nobody. I suppose the old woman told him herself. Anyway, it's my duty to take this farther. I shan't go to Godwin. The man would go off his head. I shall have a talk with Sainsbury, I think. You understand that I'm not bringing any charge against you. It's simply that this thing has been brought to me as captain of the school, and I can't just chuck it away without inquiry. If you've done no wrong you needn't be afraid. But it may be a clue, and in that case I ought not to hide the fact that it's been found. You can go now. I'll let you know what happens."

Roscoe looked round him dully, glanced at Laing, and went. A great leaden burden seemed to have fallen upon his shoulders. He crept down the corridor. Where would this end? What would people say? What proof had Menzies that he had found it on the ground by the burnt-out shop? Supposing somebody had stolen one of his handkerchiefs in the hopes of throwing guilt upon him? Who could have done such a thing? Who, who?

(*To be concluded*)

AN ECHO OF CHRISTMAS



The Phantom (to Stuffington Minor, who had not refused a third helping): "Some people don't believe in ghosts, but I'm a spectre you *can* 'swallow'!"

The Light in the Mill

A Tale of the Bombardment of Antwerp

By CAPTAIN CHARLES GILSON

Illustrated by E. F. Sherie

MR. WEDGEWOOD was working late in his office, when the door opened, and Heinrich Sprundel entered. The Dutchman's face was serious; he had the look of a disappointed child.

"You have heard the news?" he asked.

Mr. Wedgewood, putting down his pen, looked up.

"What news?" he inquired.

"England has declared war against Germany." Then he burst forth in a torrent of anger. "It is treachery," he cried, "nothing less."

The scene was the office of a well-known shipping company in Antwerp, situated near the Customs House on the right bank of the Schelde, in the shadow of one of the most magnificent cathedrals in the world.

The speaker was a short, squat man, whose close-cropped hair and rounded head denoted his Teutonic origin. He was, indeed, a Dutchman of German extraction, who for many years had carried on business as a stevedore in the great Belgian port. The other occupant of the room was a man of about fifty years of age, grey-headed, tall and straight of back. Mr. Wedgewood had lived long enough in the great cosmopolitan port to know that Sprundel's anti-British opinions were shared by a vast number of people beyond the Rhine.

"Treachery?" he repeated in amazement. "We would most certainly have been traitors had we resolved to leave Belgium to her fate, had we refused to support our allies. I regard this war as the greatest crime that has ever been perpetrated in the whole history of the world; for all that, I am glad that England has not refused to play her part."

Sprundel laughed.

"It means the end of England," said he. "Your so-called empire will crumble to bits before the first blast of the German guns."

Mr. Wedgewood rose slowly to his feet.

"My good Sprundel," said he, "if that is what you think, I advise you to go to Germany at once, and offer your services to the Kaiser. They will want all the men they can get before this war is ended."

"Ah, no," said Sprundel. "I am a Dutchman. Why should I fight for a nation that is not my own? In this war, Holland will play a neutral part. I myself will be neutral."

"You promise that?" said the Englishman.

"How else?" said Sprundel, with a hollow laugh. "I repeat, I am a neutral."

To describe the weeks that followed would be but to tell the story of the first two months of the war. After a gallant resistance, Liège fell. A few days afterwards, the walls of Namur were shattered by the German siege-guns. The heroic Belgian army was outnumbered and overpowered at Louvain, and fell back upon Antwerp, leaving Brussels to its fate. Then came the great advance on Paris, with the brilliant rearguard action of the British army, until the German rush spent itself like a wave upon the valley of the Marne.

From the Marne, the armies of the Kaiser fell back to the Aisne and to the Oise, whence the conflict spread itself north-westward, drawing nearer and nearer to the coast.

Hitherto, the German objective in the west had been Paris. Now, it was decided by the German General Staff to sweep down the coast-line from Dunkirk, possibly to Havre. Thereby, not only would England be threatened but the lines of communication of the British Expeditionary Force would be cut, and there would be some reason for rejoicing in Berlin, which city had of late shown a marked tendency to gloom. But before the German armies could cross the sand-dunes of Dunkirk and Calais,

it was necessary that Antwerp should be taken. Accordingly, the German army in Brussels moved out towards the north, taking with them the great siege-guns and howitzers which had wrought such havoc upon the fortresses of Liège, Namur, and Mauberge.

There followed the engagements at Malines and Wavre-St. Catherine, in which the gallant Belgian army, which hitherto had sustained the brunt of the German onslaught, was forced to retire upon the line of forts that encircled Antwerp. It was then, at the eleventh hour, when the German guns were audible in the very centre of the city, that a brigade of British marines was hurried across the Schelde.

That night, Tom Wedgewood walked alone in the darkened, deserted streets of Antwerp. Thousands of the inhabitants had already left the town; and even then, late though it was, refugees were pouring across the military pontoon bridge, which had been constructed at the northern end of the city.

Three months before, Tom had left school to take up an appointment in the Post Office. He had many qualifications for the post. In addition to being a trained telegraphist, he spoke German well and had a slight knowledge of both Flemish and French. Since he had joined his father a few weeks ago, the boy had lived in the atmosphere of war. He had seen troops come and go from the trenches; he had seen the wounded returning from Malines. And now, at last, the great German guns were growling to the south.

Day and night, they were never silent. It was just as if a pack of some monstrous, savage animals prowled around the city, like wolves about a camp-fire, awaiting an opportunity to rush in and seize their victims.

During these days, Mr. Wedgewood had seldom left his office. As he told his son, he considered it his duty to remain in Antwerp to the last. It was then doubtful whether the forts would hold out. The Belgian field army—as the soldiers themselves confessed—was worn out and exhausted. The British marine brigade was welcomed with open arms; and there were rumours abroad that more English troops, with heavy guns, were hastening to the relief of the city.

Mr. Wedgewood's private house was in the southern part of the town, not far from the Porte des Malines. As Tom reached his home, his father drove up in his motor-car from his office in the central part of the city.

"Any news?" asked the boy.

"The worst," said Mr. Wedgewood. "Two more forts have fallen—battered into rubbish heaps by the German howitzers. Their infantry has crossed the Nethe. They have only to erect concrete platforms on this side of the river, and they will be able to bombard the city."

That night, the firing drew nearer and nearer. Great shells were bursting along the inner line of forts, and several villages on the outskirts of the city were on fire.

The following day, there was a silence which was like the calm that precedes a storm. A German airman flew over the city, dropping pamphlets calling upon the town to surrender. He was fired at by the guns in the forts. The blue sky was flecked here and there with the white puffs of bursting shrapnel. But the German succeeded in getting back to his own lines, where, no doubt, he was decorated for his valour.

By evening, Antwerp was almost deserted. Few people remained, and these did not venture into the streets, where no one was to be seen but officers and soldiers—Belgian, French, and British.

The deathlike stillness, after the continuous firing of the previous days, was in itself unnerving. There was no one in the city who did not know and understand what this silence meant. The enemy's siege guns, that had already accomplished so much against fortresses which had been thought impregnable, were drawing nearer and nearer to the ill-fated city.

Tom was on the point of falling off to sleep, when he became conscious of a dull, rumbling sound, which was growing louder and louder. Going to the window, he opened it and looked out. The narrow street was deserted save for Mr. Wedgewood's motor-car, which remained before the door, and which Tom himself had driven from the city, Mr. Wedgewood having decided to sleep that night in his office.

As the boy listened, the cause of the rumbling sound became quite evident; and presently, a great number of motor-lorries came into sight. Each one was loaded with ammunition, and guarded by a British bluejacket with bayonet fixed.

Tom, who had little or no desire to sleep, hastily put on his clothes, and went out, following in the track of the wagons. He found the British ammunition train halted in the Grande Chassee, a wide square only a few hundred yards from Mr. Wedgewood's house. Even then the ammunition was being unloaded, and placed in a great, empty warehouse on the southern side of the square.

For some time, Tom watched the sailors at

work, and then turned to go. As he did so he caught sight of a dark figure, moving silently and swiftly in the shadow of the trees which fringed either side of the roadway.

The moon was low in the heavens, so that only one angle of the square was illumined; and as this shadowy form crossed the moonlight, Tom Wedgewood recognised—or thought he recognised—the figure of the Dutchman, Sprundel.

Tom set forward at a run; but when he gained the street on the other side of the square, no sign of anyone was to be seen. He searched everywhere, and even went to Sprundel's house—a five-storied, flat-topped building, called the Maison Hibou—which he found in darkness. Not till then did he resolve to return home to bed. It was already well past eleven.

And hardly had he laid his head upon the pillow, when the great, dull report of a cannon sounded from the south. Almost immediately, a shell flew overhead, whistling and shrieking like a lost spirit in the night. There followed a thunderous crash as the shell burst in the city, and a little villa in the Rue de Flandre was torn down like a house of cards.

From that moment onward, Antwerp was like a pit in Hades. The air was alive with great shells from howitzers and 12in. guns that shrieked and moaned and hooted. The thunder of artillery was constant; it was as if a storm had swept down upon the city. The terrible explosions caused houses in the near vicinity to tremble to their foundations, whilst every shell made more complete and horrible the work of devastation.

For a quarter of an hour, Tom Wedgewood lay upon his bed, wondering what was the meaning of it all. He had known Antwerp since his very earliest days, and had come to love the city. It seemed as if the whole world were mad, as though justice had ceased to reign on earth; for, the boy knew well enough that every explosion meant the destruction of a house and, perhaps, the death of all its inmates.

At last he could stand it no longer. Putting on his clothes, he went up the stairs to the top story, and there climbed through an open skylight to the roof.

The scene that he beheld was like a nightmare. At several places in the city fires had broken out, and there were already crimson patches in the sky across which rolled clouds of smoke.

He stood for some minutes watching the scene, in mingled horror and amazement. It was at once magnificent and terrible.

Presently his attention was directed to a strange light upon a neighbouring housetop. This light winked and flickered in a manner that was more than a little suspicious. The boy could not at first realise the evidence of his eyes; and yet, after a while, there was no room for doubt. He had discovered a signalling-lamp.

Tom caught his breath. It was well known that Antwerp was full of spies. That very morning one had been captured.

It did not take him long to satisfy himself that the signalling-lamp was stationed on the roof of the tall, flat-topped building that went by the name of the Maison Hibou, whence someone was signalling in the direction of the line of forts. Straining his eyes to the south, he caught sight of an answering lamp, which he realised at once was stationed in an old windmill, near the suburb of Vieux Dieu.

With the agility of a cat, he scrambled through the skylight, and raced down the stairs, two steps at a time. A moment later, he was in the street. He found himself in a situation in which it was necessary to act with promptitude. Someone was signalling from the city, and that man was Sprundel. Since the German guns were at least ten miles away, the windmill played the part of a go-between; a kind of half-way house, by means of which Sprundel was sending his messages to the German lines.

The door of the spy's house was locked; but Tom Wedgewood kicked it in, and entered. The place was in silence, and in the hall he struck a match and looked about him. Near at hand was a candle, which he lighted, and with this he began to ascend the stairs.

When he was half-way up, he remembered that he was unarmed. However, it was too late to go back and get a revolver; every minute was of account.

At the top he came to a skylight which was open, and through which had been placed a ladder, in order to enable the Dutchman to ascend to the roof. Tom was about to set foot upon the lowest rung of the ladder, when his attention was attracted by something white that lay upon the floor.

Stooping, he picked up a letter, which he saw at once was written in German.

A door was open on the right, and through this he passed into a small attic bedroom. The bed had been slept in that night. The servant who had occupied it had no doubt fled in the

utmost haste at the opening of the bombardment. Everything in the room was in disorder. Drawers had been left open, the looking-glass knocked over and smashed. In the centre of the room was a trunk, half packed, the lid of which had been thrown back so violently that one of the hinges had been broken.

Tom, seating himself upon the bed, had no difficulty in reading the letter, which was written in a large, bold, Teutonic hand.

It is necessary that our heavy batteries know the exact whereabouts of the following:—

(1) The British headquarters.
(2) The British ammunition depot.
(3) The headquarters of the Belgian staff.
(4) All troops held in reserve.

Discover what you can, and signal out to the windmill at Vieux Dieu, which is in direct communication with us.

If your messages get through you will be recommended for the Iron Cross.

The signature at the bottom was illegible, not being in the same handwriting as the letter itself.

Tom Wedgewood folded the paper, and put it in his pocket. He was now face to face with the full perfidy of Sprundel, who, professing to be a neutral, was in the pay of the German Secret Service, and who was probably a German by birth.

As silently as possible, the boy climbed the ladder, to find himself upon the roof. The fires in the city had spread. The sky was purple, in places red like blood, which even then was being shed so wantonly. On every side, the great shells were shrieking like living things driven mad by torment.

At the farther end of the roof, two men stood close together, their figures silhouetted against a blazing fire to the south. One of these was Sprundel; the other a man whom Tom had never seen before—a thin man whose head and shoulders towered above his companion. Tom could hear their voices quite distinctly. They spoke together in German.

"What comes next?" asked Sprundel.

At the farthest end of the roof, silhouetted against a blazing fire to the south, stood the two men whose signals Tom had intercepted.

The tall man fumbled in his pocket for a moment.

"I have lost the letter," said he. "I must have dropped it on the stairs."

"Go back," said Sprundel, "and look for it."

The other laughed. "There is no need for that," he answered; "my memory is good. The British ammunition is stored in the

Grande Chassee. One shell will explode the lot."

Bending down, Sprundel picked up the small signalling-lamp, and immediately there was audible the irregular ticking of the Morse code.

The so-called Dutchman had had no time to signal more than three letters before Tom Wedgewood flew at his throat like a mad dog. Sprundel came down full-length upon the roof, dragging Tom with him, and knocking over the signalling-lamp in his fall. Sprundel's accomplice whipped a revolver from his pocket, and most certainly would have fired, had not the two struggling forms been so closely locked together.

For a moment, the thin man was undecided. He dared not fire for fear of hitting Sprundel. Then, seizing his revolver by the muzzle, he endeavoured to deal the English boy a stunning blow on the head.

Fortunately he missed. The butt end of the revolver fell harmlessly upon Tom's shoulder Whereupon, the tall man raised the weapon to strike again.

Tom, realising that he must leave Sprundel, sprang sharply to his feet. The tall man drew back to gain space in which to fire. That step backward was his own undoing, for it brought him to the very edge of the roof.

He fired once, but was never given time to fire a second shot. For Tom let out with his fist, and caught the spy a shattering blow on the chin. The man tottered for an instant, and then went over backward, to be dashed to eternity upon the hard cobbles of the street, fifty feet below.

As he turned, Tom became conscious of a stinging sensation in the shoulder. Then it was that he realised for the first time that he was wounded. Warm blood was flowing to his waist. The revolver bullet had torn a way for itself beneath the collar-bone, and the whole of his left arm was already aching.

We give no thought to pain in the moments of the greatest excitement. As Tom Wedgewood carried his hand to his wound, he looked about him, and saw that Sprundel had escaped. There was no sign of anyone on the roof; the head of the ladder had disappeared from the skylight.

Just then, a shell burst near at hand, and the explosion was followed by a noise of a banging door. Tom, going down on hands and knees, crawled to the edge of the roof, and looked down into the street. There he saw the spy, lantern in hand, flinging open the doors of the garage where he kept his motor-car.

Sprundel entered the darkness of the garage, and presently a motor-car backed out into the street, turned with difficulty, and then started off towards the Porte des Malines at the rate of forty miles an hour. Tom Wedgewood realised the truth as in a flash. Unable to signal to the windmill at Vieux Dieu, the spy was going there himself to send his message to the German lines.

Tom waited to think no more. Rushing to the open skylight, he sprang down, alighted on his feet, and then hastened down the stairs.

Sprundel had gone to the south. There was no doubt he intended to leave the city by the Porte des Malines across which passes the main road that leads to the southern forts. It took the boy not more than a few minutes to reach his own house, to spring into his motor-car, and set forward in pursuit.

He found the gate guarded by a detachment of Belgian soldiers. To these he gave the countersign, which enabled him to pass. He learnt that the spy had passed through a few minutes in advance. Sprundel had somehow gained possession of the password, and was now probably nearing the windmill at Vieux Dieu.

Tom was obliged to go slowly over the bridge, because of the mines which had been placed under every pier ready to blow up the bridge at a moment's notice; but, once safely across, he moved forward at a breakneck speed, the great car droning like a monster bee.

By dint of the fact that he was travelling at forty miles an hour at least, his journey was by no means devoid of peril. The huge shells of the enemy were falling in every direction. Trees, telegraph poles, and lamp-posts had been knocked down, and lay everywhere across the road, where there were also great holes several feet in depth. Telegraph wires lay in coils upon the roadway; while here and there were dead horses and broken carts and wagons. Upon the eastern horizon were visible the first signs of dawn. A narrow streak of steel-grey announced the approach of sunrise. Surely, in the history of the world, there were few more tragic mornings.

As Tom Wedgewood approached the trenches, the reports of the cannon were like a cyclone. The air reverberated with peal upon peal of thunder. For all that, he was now out of danger. The Belgian guns were firing to the south, and the German shells, flying far overhead, were bursting in the southern quarter of the city. Presently, he turned to the left, taking a narrow lane that led towards Vieux Dieu. Here, by reason of the trees, the roadway would have

been quite dark, had it not been for a farmhouse and several haystacks which were on fire.

Tom came upon the windmill from the south. As he did so, a signalling-lamp was "calling up" the German lines. To spring out of the car, and climb up the old ramshackle ladder in the windmill, was the work of a few seconds.

He found Sprundel alone. The original inmate of the windmill had been killed by a shrapnel bullet, aimed at the British trenches.

Forgetful of his wound, the boy hurled himself upon the traitor. The struggle that ensued lasted not many seconds. Sprundel,

As his senses returned to him, Tom saw that the figure bending over him was that of a British officer.

who was armed with a revolver, would have fired, had not Tom Wedgewood laid hold of his wrist, to which he clung in desperation.

Using all the strength at his disposal, Tom wrenched the revolver from the spy's grasp, and then struggled free. He fired twice, and missed. For a moment, Sprundel was undecided whether to continue the struggle or to seek safety in flight. It did not take him long to make up his mind; for, when Tom fired a third time, the spy sprang down the ladder, jumped into his own motor-car, and drove off furiously towards the city.

Tom looked about him; and then, on a sudden, a sense of dizziness took possession of him. There was no light in the little windmill, save that which came from the opened shutter of the signalling-lamp. It seemed to Tom that this light swung round and round, and then dropped into abysmal depths.

The boy endeavoured to steady himself by leaning against the wall; but his knees gave way from under him, and he fell to the ground in a faint.

How long he lay there, he was never afterwards able to say. When he came to his senses a man was bending over him whom he recognised as a British officer of marines. It was then half daylight, though the sun had not yet risen.

At first, the boy could not recollect what had happened or where he was. Then, the whole truth came upon him as in a flash.

He sprang to his feet, and looked out from the windmill. Far away to the south, a signalling-lamp was "calling up" from the German lines.

In a few breathless words, he told the officer what had happened, and then, going to the signalling-lamp, he sent the following message:—

"*What do you want?*"

"*You have not yet told us,*" came back the answer, "*where the British ammunition is stored.*"

Tom Wedgewood hesitated a moment; and then an idea seized him which was prompted partly by patriotism and partly by revenge.

"*The Maison Hibou,*" he signalled back.

"The Maison Hibou!" exclaimed the officer. "Where's that?"

Tom Wedgewood laughed. It was the laugh of one who was overwrought with excitement and nervous strain.

"It's Sprundel's house. It's the house of a spy."

For some minutes, they waited in the windmill with their eyes straining in the semi-darkness towards the German lines. For a while there was silence. The German gunners were evidently laying their great guns by means of the accurate maps which were in their possession. In these maps every house in every street of Antwerp was clearly marked. The scientific accuracy of their firing is well known to all who have fought for the allied cause.

Presently the great guns spoke in quick succession. The skies burst into thunder as the dawn rose in the east, and great, living shells tore through the air, directed upon the stricken town.

Hour by hour the shelling continued, relentlessly and undiminished in intensity and fury. Throughout that day, the whole city of Antwerp lay under the scourge of modern war. Towards evening, the order came to retire. There were no guns in the forts capable of replying to the German howitzers, and it was decided in the cause of humanity to evacuate the city. If the bombardment continued for many days, the whole place would be reduced to ruins, Antwerp would share the fate of Louvain.

The allied troops drew away from the ill-fated city, maintaining their discipline and in good order. Near the burning suburb of Vieux Dieu, Tom Wedgewood said good-bye to the marine officer who had accompanied him from the windmill. The officer returned to his men in the trenches, and Tom found his own way back into the city, where several houses were now ablaze, the fires spreading with rapidity. In the northern part of the town, on the banks of the Schelde, the Belgians themselves had set fire to several tanks of petroleum. In this place the flames were as high as hills, and a great column of black smoke rose thousands of feet into the air.

The boy drove his motor-car slowly through the deserted, ravaged streets. He was obliged to go slowly, since the roadways were so torn up by shell-fire that it was necessary to drive with the utmost caution.

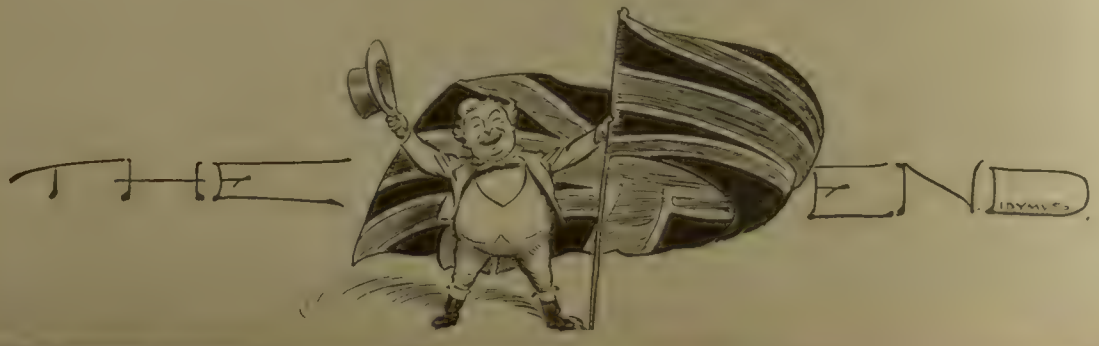
It was Tom's intention to go to the northern pontoon bridge, near which he hoped to find his father. Thence they could make their escape towards the coast. But, before he left the southern part of the city, he drove to the Maison Hibou. There the sight that met his eyes was such as caused him to stop and get out of his car, to examine a scene that was illustrative of the enormous damage that can be done by high-angle guns, firing great shells charged with high explosives.

A huge shell had struck the building at its base, and the whole edifice had crumbled to the ground. Nothing remained but the lower portions of three exterior walls.

In the midst of the debris, half buried amid rafters, masonry, and plaster, lay the remains of one who had been a spy. Sprundel was no more. He himself was one of the victims of his own treachery and baseness.

When Tom Wedgewood and his father crossed the pontoon bridge that evening, they halted at the Tête de Flandre to look back upon a city that was doomed. Night fell upon a scene that was like a nightmare. From all quarters of the town red flames darted like living tongues, spreading a purple canopy upon the heavens that rivalled the glories of the sunset. The German shells were still falling like rain in the neighbourhood of the cathedral and the central railway station. But the town was deserted—a city of the grave.

Together, father and son set forward on their way, with heavy, aching hearts, fleeing like thousands of others before the pitiless advance of the modern Huns.



"THE CAPTAIN" WAR PORTFOLIO

Some of the Most Stirring Episodes of the War, depicted by Frank H. Mason, R.B.A., Lionel Edwards, Stanley L. Wood, Sydney Adamson, and George Soper

A Russian sentry can only be relieved by order of the officer who placed him on guard. An outpost was about to be relieved when his officer was shot by a German sniper. For many hours the sentry remained steadfastly at his post, and was almost exhausted when the Tsar and his staff happened to ride by. His Majesty stopped to make enquiries, and himself gave the faithful soldier his release from duty.

The first Territorial battalion to go into action, the London Scottish, gave a splendid proof of their valour

and efficiency near Ypres, where a spirited charge by this regiment frustrated a threatened German advance.

GERMANS DEFENDING A CHATEAU

Many a fine French house was left in ruins by the Germans, both during their advance to Paris and their subsequent retreat| therefrom. The drawing shows a party of the German Imperial Guard defending a chateau in Northern France against an attempt of the Allies to regain it.

A VALIANT INDIAN

Though shot in five places, an Indian officer slew ten of the enemy in a hand-to-hand fight before he was brought down by a bullet, and left for dead. He was found by his comrades later, however, and removed to a hospital, where every hope is entertained of his recovery.

Surrounded by Germans in superior numbers, the 205th regiment of French infantry found the fight going so badly against them that they were on the point of surrendering, when several batteries of the British Royal Field Artillery dashed to their rescue and with excellent gunnery drove the enemy from their position.

A GERMAN SUBMARINE SURRENDERS

One of our patrolling vessels, sighting a German submarine, U18, off the coast of Scotland, rammed it, and the submarine disappeared, but came to the surface an hour later flying the white flag, her crew on deck. The officers and men were taken on board the British destroyer "Garry."

A SCHOOLBOY RANKER

A Story of a Dipcote Boy who Saved a French Battalion from Destruction

By RICHARD BIRD :: :: :: Illustrated by H. McCormick

I

"WANT a magazine?" asked Crabtree, with laconic geniality, as he flung the journal in question across the carriage. His companion Errington, fellow-member of the Dipcote Sixth Form, shook his head and gazed gloomily out of the window at the speeding landscape.

"No, thanks," he grunted, not even looking round.

The tone was so monotonously cheerless that Crabtree relapsed into silence for a few minutes. Presently he said: "What's up, old chap? You don't seem particularly festive. Hardly a word since we left Cambridge, and it's only half an hour to Dipcote. Got the blues?"

"Yes; I've got the blues. . . ."

"Cough it up, then, old hoss. Let's hear about it, and perhaps——"

Errington made an impatient gesture. There was no reason for silence. And he was more than "fed" with his thoughts.

"Wouldn't you have the blues," he burst out, "if you were in my place? It's all very well for you—coming back with eighty pounds for three years in your pocket——"

"I'm not counting my chickens——"

"Bosh! Everyone knows you're an absolute sitter for an £80 schol. at any Cambridge coll. you shoot for. You say yourself you did good papers — and one of *your* 'good papers' is enough to bet on."

Crabtree smiled.

"Well . . . I have hope . . . but it's no good speeching. I may have got a schol., but there's no knowing what you've done."

Errington shook his head.

"I *know* I've done badly. You *know* that's not mock modesty. You know that I'm bottom of the Sixth and haven't got an ounce of scholarship in me. I'm as certain as if I'd seen the list that I haven't even won a sub-sizarship or junior — junissimus exhibition. It was absolute rot sending me up to try. As a matter of fact I *know* the Old Man advised my uncle against it, but the pig-headed old ass insisted on my going. I know I'm not cut out for exams or bookwork——"

"Well, even if you fail, it won't be your fault," said Crabtree comfortingly. "Your uncle won't blame you for that."

Errington sighed.

"It's not that. He's my guardian and I have to do what he says. Whether I get a schol. or not, he'll make me go up to the 'Varsity next year. I don't want to go. I'm not cut out for that."

"What's your own idea?"

"I *wanted* to go into motor-engineering but he wouldn't hear of it—wouldn't even listen to engineering at Cambridge. He insists on my doing law with the idea of leaving me his practice some day. I hate the notion. And now, it's worse. . . ."

"How 'worse'?"

"Well . . ." Errington hesitated, and then went on, almost with a blush. "This war, you know. . . ."

"I don't see what that's got to do with it."

"Don't you? I do. I'd like to be with our fellows in France. . . . Who wants to swot at exams when our chaps are fighting over there?"

Crabtree smiled sympathetically.

"I see. . . . All this glory business——"

"No—not just that! When our chaps were doing so splendidly at Mons—fighting every inch of the way against triple their numbers—I'd have given *anything* to be with them, helping . . . and I've been wishing it ever since." He turned away to hide his emotion. "But it's no use. . . . That old uncle wouldn't hear of it. I wrote to ask if I might leave Dipcote and enlist—I'm just over nineteen—but he jumped on the notion. Old man, I'm *fed*."

Not knowing how to comfort his friend, Crabtree held his tongue. He was barely eighteen and a bookworm: the University appealed to him strongly. He was looking forward to a career in which books held pride of place. Tolerably certain in his own mind that he was returning with a "schol." in his pocket, conscious that his age and defective eyesight debarred him from martial visions—even if he wished—he was returning contentedly

to Dipcote. But he was sorry for his friend, condemned without hope to the pursuit of law.

A fortnight later Errington was justified of his optimism and pessimism. The lists of the college "group" were published. Errington had won nothing at all at any college. Crabtree had won an eighty-pounder at one of the most famous colleges. The Old Man announced in Big School that, in accordance with custom, Dipcote would be granted an extra half-holiday in honour of the scholarship. In the study that night Crabtree was the recipient of varied congratulations, not the least hearty of which was Errington's.

"Told you so, old chap!" he said. "Don't you feel jolly at getting the school an extra half?"

"It is good," admitted Crabtree. "I'm a lucky brute."

"No luckier than you deserve. I only wish I could do the same."

"But I thought you weren't a bit keen on getting a schol.!"

"Nor am I—except for that! I must say I'd like to do something worth giving a half to Dipcote for!" Errington laughed half wistfully—half shamefacedly. "But that's about as probable as my getting a schol. And meanwhile there's my uncle-guardian to face."

"Not till the holidays, though."

Errington wagged a rueful head.

"No such luck. He's coming down to Dipcote to-morrow to 'talk things over.' Help!"

Mr. Nasmyth fulfilled his promise and came down to Dipcote to see his two orphan nephews and the Head. With the latter he was closeted for about half an hour—much to the Head's annoyance. He refused to accept Dr. Shorten's view of his elder nephew's capabilities, having set his heart on stamping Charles Errington with a Cambridge hall-mark. Convinced that perseverance and application were the only necessities for ultimate success—oblivious that temperaments and tastes are also worthy of attention—he accepted no single opinion of the Old Man, but held inflexibly to his original views. These he elaborated during a subsequent walk. The pith of it was that Charles was condemned to go up to Cambridge again, to try his luck with another "group." If that failed, he might go on to Oxford. If *all* failed, he must go up next October without a scholarship, but *resolved* to work hard and wrest an honours degree from cross-examiners. "Try, try, try again, Charles—you know that's been my motto all my life. It's the best motto of all." Charles listened in a hopeless silence. In himself he *knew* that his uncle was going on the wrong tack. He was anxious and ready to "try again" and try hard, but—not for a degree!

"Uncle!" he said at last, with a despairing attempt to shake him. "Uncle! I know I'm not cut out for this! Won't you let me try something else? Won't you let me leave Dipcote this term?"

"For the sake of argument—mind! only for the sake of argument, Charles!—what do you propose to do—supposing I agreed to your leaving Dipcote at Christmas instead of next summer?"

Charles's heart leapt.

"Couldn't I get a commission in the army, uncle? They're much easier to get now; and . . . and I'd like awfully to help teach the Germans some manners!"

"The *army*, Charles? But . . . you're only a boy——"

"Past nineteen, uncle!"

"Out of the question, Charles——"

"But *why*, uncle? I'm awfully keen——"

"You were just as keen on engineering a little time ago. See how unstable your views are! Remember, I am your guardian—I stand *in loco parentis*, you know. I have to think of your future."

"I know, uncle, but——"

"Allow me to speak, Charles! You are still a boy in fact, even though you have turned nineteen. Supposing you *did* go into the army—supposing you came safely through a campaign—what prospects are there? Having spent some months or years in military life, what preparation is that for the law?"

"Couldn't I stay in the army? I might get on—I know I'd like it better than law——"

"Charles! We cannot always do what we would *like!* You know I *need* a partner. You know that the place is waiting for you as soon as you are qualified to take it up. And, in the face of that, you suggest the army! My dear boy, it's impossible!"

"But, uncle——"

"Quite impossible!" repeated Mr. Nasmyth firmly. "Put the notion out of your head. If there was need—real *need*, Charles—I should be the last to stand in your way——"

"Kitchener says he still wants men, uncle!"

"By the time you were ready for the front, Charles, I am sure the war would be over."

"I have my O.T.C. training, uncle; and I might get to the front in a few weeks."

"Most unlikely, my dear boy."

And then Charles held his tongue. With

this man no argument was possible, save with a club. For the rest of the walk he silently endured.

II

LIFE at Dipcote proceeded on the usual uneventful routine. The days passed and brought nothing more notable than the first round of the house matches. Football, of course, prevailed at the school; though—equally, of course—the Old Dipcotian Club had cancelled all its fixtures, nearly all of its playing members having volunteered for foreign service. The school footer and house footer provided exercise, but the usual thrills were absent: fellows did not take the same interest in the games when the greatest of all games was being played not so very far away. Errington—one of the old colours—played even as the rest, but footer brought him only a temporary relief from his worries. He had struck a patch of moodiness and as yet saw no way out. In another week or so he was to try his luck again at Cambridge. Though his views had undergone no change, he did his work as regularly and honestly as he could. He *knew* that he was not cut out either for the law or the University, and daily his loathing for exams. and his craving to be shouldering a rifle with the flower of England's youth increased. But he did not talk any more about it, even to Crabtree. In silence and bitterness he "carried on" until a certain day.

It was a bright day of sunshine, early in November. Last period of morning school had come—a light and easy lesson, labelled "English" in the time-table. The title covered a multitude of interests. "So long as I can get the boys *interested* in humanity, I don't care!" was the sensible creed of Mr. Stretton, the master in charge; and though a casual observer might have thought his lessons too frivolous, it was amazing how much real knowledge and sympathies his pupils picked up. To-day, after twenty minutes of "English Seamen" and a fascinating cruise—per wall map—with Drake down the Atlantic, up the Pacific, and so home through the Malay Straits, he pulled out a clipping from his pocket, shutting "Froude" up with a decisive click.

"And now for something topical," he said. "I cut this out of to-day's newspaper. It's quite a little thing about the war."

The class pricked up its ears. There was a slight shuffle indicative of interest. Mr. Stretton smiled—a wistful, mournful smile.

"No; it's not precisely exciting," he said. "War isn't always an occasion for mafficking. One is apt, too, to think of our flags and drums and throbs—too apt to dwell on victory—too reluctant to face the possibilities of defeat and worse. This little cutting may sound trivial to you: I ask you to think over it and try to realise some of the by-ways of war. Next week I may want you to write an essay on it. For myself—" he paused a moment as if trying to clear his throat—"for myself, a cutting like this brings home some of the meaning of war more forcibly than the most lurid accounts of wounds and deaths. I will read it aloud: it is quite short, and I believe quite true. At least, I know nothing to discredit it." The clipping was taken from the *Glasgow Herald*:—

AN INFANT'S CRY.

Bombardier Stoddard, of the Royal Field Artillery, who is in hospital at Leeds, sends an account of an effort to save a baby. He says: "I heard a cry from an empty house, and when I went in I found a baby, about eleven months old, lying crying in its nightgown. I brought the youngster out. It was raining in torrents at the time, and I carried it about five and a half miles. It was crying all the way, and I tried to conceal it from our sergeant, but eventually he said I should be obliged to put it down as we were going into action, so I laid it in a hedge and covered it with some straw, hoping that someone would soon find it and take care of it. It made me think of my own children. Oh, if you could only see the plight of the poor, homeless wretches, it would make you shudder."

Mr. Stretton paused for a moment after he had finished reading. Then:—

"I do not wish to add anything to that," he said gently, though his face worked perceptibly. "It is ten minutes before bell-time, but you may go now—quietly."

The Sixth Form obeyed. Gathering up their books they made a comparatively noiseless exit. When they were clear of the building they began to discuss Mr. Stretton, the clipping, and the Germans.

"What hounds!" said Crabtree, drawing a deep breath.

"That bombardier must have been a decent chap," said another—Perkins by name. "Rotten luck the sergeant spotted him. . . ."

"What else could he do?" queried Bastable, frowning. "Going into action—how could he carry a kiddie into the firing line?"

"War . . ." mused Crabtree. "War . . . it must be horrible. . . . What d'you think of that, Errington?"

Charles Errington did not answer. He was walking along with his lips tight shut and his

fists clenched inside his pockets. He did not seem to hear the question, and Crabtree repeated it. Then Errington roused himself to speak, and his words seemed to grate on his teeth.

"If I could only get at the brutes who started the whole show——" he began, and left the sentence unfinished. Then, without another word, he walked swiftly away, leaving his friends in some perplexity.

"I suppose you want to wave a sword and win a V.C.?" said the major, chaffingly.

"Queer chap," was Perkins' comment.

"Jolly queer," said Bastable.

"But a good sort," added Crabtree, and all agreed.

For a few days more Errington kept his own counsel. His school work was done as usual, his football proved no less active. Nothing, apparently, altered the even tenor of his way. When the Old Man ran across him by chance in the Dipcote post-office, transacting some business with a Savings Bank book he thought nothing of it—indeed he hardly noticed the buff-coloured cover that meant so much to Charles.

But that night Charles had his young brother Frank into his study for a "feed" and a "jaw." Frank, appreciative and wondering, filled himself nigh to bursting with fraternal food. At the end of the banquet Charles sat back and spoke briefly, but to the point.

"Frank, old man," he said, "you know something of how I'm fixed. Uncle says 'Law'—I know it's N.G. I want to go to the front—Uncle says N.G.—I've thought a lot about it; a—a newspaper story I heard the other day has driven in the last nail. I've settled to bolt."

"*What!*" stammered Frank.

"Yes; I've thought it all out and made up my mind. If uncle would give me a show I'd tell him, but he won't. I daren't tell the Old Man, because he's bound to back up uncle. I can't bolt and try to get a commission — bound to be spotted and turned back—but I'm going to enlist as a private, and . . . and try to do my bit for the country. I can't stand waiting here any longer when other chaps are shoving the Germans back to their kennels. I . . . I've simply *got* to lend a hand."

"Will you let me come too, Charlie?"

asked Frank, eagerly. The elder brother shook his head with a wry smile.

"Sorry, old man—you're too young. But I had to tell you before I went."

"When d'you mean to go?"

"To-morrow. It's a half, and if I go after dinner I shan't be missed before lock-up at six o'clock. That gives me nearly five hours' start. With luck I might not be missed till bed-time, and the way I've fixed it I shan't be traced, I think. I can't tell you—better not. Then you can say you knew I was going, but you don't know how. See?"

"Yes."

"I'll write to you as soon as I'm decently fixed. Frankie, you must buck up while I am away—I'd like to see you a bit higher up in the Third."

"I'll have a shot," said Frank, awed by the occasion.

"Good man. I hate having to go like this, but I . . . I simply *must*. If only uncle were a bit more reasonable—but it's no good talking. Now cut off. I'll see you to-morrow, after dinner."

"Mayn't I see you off to the station?"

"It's not certain that I shall use the station. I may or I may not. I'll shake your paw after dinner, and then—listen!—you're to go and play footer as usual. See?"

"Righto," gulped Frank, and soon after the brothers separated.

And it fell out well. After dinner next day Charles Errington went to his study. There he made sure that his Savings Bank withdrawal of sixteen pounds was safe—ten pounds in a money belt next his skin, the rest in a prosaic purse. In ordinary attire, with a thick overcoat and a tweed cap in his pocket (the Dipcote cap to be discarded later), he put a few homely necessaries, such as a pocket knife, note-book and pencil, in his pockets.

Then he waited for his brother. Frank came in full of mystery and importance a moment later. Farewells were not prolonged. The paw was gripped in silence—Charles was afraid of breaking down if he essayed more—suddenly he desired to risk it.

"So-long, old man!" he said. "Buck up!"

He kissed his astonished little brother, and then violently ordered him to the football field. Five minutes later Charles Errington was on the high road. Ten minutes more, and he had disinterred a bag containing sundry changes of garments from his locker in the pav. Then on to the high road once more.

He walked briskly along—but not towards the station! Charles knew a trick worth two of that. A day-boy friend, who had been bound to secrecy, met him in a by-road with a motor-bicycle hired in the town. Charles had avoided hiring it himself that it might not give a clue to his movements. In a few minutes the bag was strapped on the carrier. A hurried "So long!" "Good luck, old chap!" and then the day-boy found himself staring after a figure, goggled and bowed over the handle-bars. The first stage of the great adventure was over.

Errington's plans had been neither hasty nor ill advised. If he had applied for a commission, he would have had to wait, submit references, etc., and inevitably been traced long before he could have hoped to be gazetted. Again, if he simply went to the nearest recruiting office, he might have been suspiciously refused or traced. Even if accepted he almost certainly would have been put to training in camp—doomed to cool his heels in England for months before seeing any fighting. He might never even leave England. This was not what he wanted.

His whole soul burned to be in the fray—to be fighting for his country and for Right against Wrong—to do something towards avenging that tiny babe, those misused and heroic Belgians—to stamp out the arrogant tyranny of German Goths. He knew that his O.T.C. training fitted him for the field. He had been in the Dipcote O.T.C. for five years, held the rank of sergeant, was a marksman and a trained scout: he was *ready*, turned nineteen, and knew he could be of use, if only he could burst the bonds of red-tape and uncledom and—*get to the front*. He was determined to try; he had a plan; and this is what he did.

Keen on motoring, he knew how to run a motor-bike. He left Dipcote at about 2 p.m. He was luckily not seriously missed till 11.15, for his house-master was away that day, and the junior house-master thought that the Sixth Former had probably got leave to visit friends in town. When prayers came, there was an inquiry. No one knew anything. The junior house-master thought it irregular, but was not uneasy. In any case, there was nothing to do but wait for a late return. When he was not in the house at 11.15, Mr. Hatton thought something must be wrong, and reported it. The senior master came back at 11.30 by a late train and got worried. However, what could be done save wait till morning? Still no sign of Errington. His brother was questioned and truthfully said that Charles had gone to enlist—where and how he knew not. The nearest recruiting office was without result. London was telegraphed

to and the police informed. No result. A sharp look-out was kept *inland*, but no one thought of watching the ports. Who would? Consequently at 3.30 the following day, Charles Errington sent back the hired motor-bike *per* train from Southampton. He himself embarked on a packet for Havre, which he reached without mishap. Then, by occasional trains, by "lifts" on peasants' carts, and by "shank's" mare he proceeded on his righteous pilgrimage. This story has no space to describe his journey. It must suffice to say that after four days' wanderings—very interesting and somewhat eventful—he found himself in touch with a British division. He met a cheerful corporal of the Exshire regiment and told him his hopes and fears.

"Lawks!" said the corporal. "You're a good plucked 'un! But d'you think they'll let you enlist *here?*"

"Hope so," said Charles, modestly. "If you'll put me in the way of a decent officer it might be worked."

"Lawks!" repeated Corporal Power, "it's a dorg's chance, but I'll try."

In war time things happen which do not happen in peace. The corporal introduced Errington to Lieutenant Soames. He passed him on to Captain Ferguson. He, in like perplexity, transferred the eager Charles to Colonel Matcham. "My boy, it's out of the question!" he said. "What's your school? Dipcote? I believe our senior major's a Dipcotian. We'll see him." The senior major was not a Dipcotian, after all, but he was (so Charles avers) a good sort. He reiterated the opinion that the thing was impossible—oh! quite impossible.

"I suppose you want to wave a sword and win a V.C.?" he said, chaffingly.

Errington bit his lip. "No, sir," he said. "I want you to let me come in as a private." His voice trembled. "I've . . . I've tried hard to get through, sir. Don't send me back now!"

The senior major repented his jest, and blew his nose. "It's out of the question—quite irregular!" he said; and then: "Orderly!" One Private Tollerton appeared. "Yessir?" "Go and covet some khaki from yesterday's batch of wounded. Take this recruit to the colour-sergeant and see that he's put in B Company."

"Yessir."

A salute, and lo, the impossible had happened! The eye of officialdom had winked. Charles Errington was now Private Errington, and a unit of His Majesty's Expeditionary Force.

III

Of the next few weeks the curious must expect no detailed account. Frank Errington may be consulted, for he got an occasional letter or post-card from his brother, giving no details of his position or even regiment, but sundry tales of his experiences in the ranks. The weeks were full and busy—plenty of hardships cheerfully borne—days of waiting and wondering whether defeat or victory was to be granted—nights in trenches half filled with mud, nights of awful anxiety — sometimes with plenty of food, sometimes with little. Hints of aeroplanes flitting here and there—racking storms of shrapnel—hammering noise of rifle bullets—snapping rattles of *mitrailleuses* and counter-blasting maxims—odd games of football in rear of the firing line—glimpses of heroes and brutes—bioscopic flashes of horror and superlative abnegation. Charles' letters were short and gave no connected pictures; he was too busy—marching, fighting, hanging on. He enjoyed himself thoroughly. Sickened by carnage, he knew he was playing a brave game, that he was striking a blow for just things, and the knowledge helped him in the midst of horrors to *enjoy* the man's life, the man's part in the struggle against barbarism and broken faith. War was a novelty: soldiering was not. Trained by his O.T.C. work and several school camps, he soon learned to adapt himself to war conditions. His sergeant at first kept a fatherly eye on this strange recruit, but soon he found that it was unnecessary. The boy could shoot, take cover, or scrabble with an entrenching tool as well as many a seasoned soldier, and his school footer had brought him into France in the pink of condition. Doubtful at first of the senior major's wisdom, the sergeant soon changed his opinion. "If ye go on as ye've begun," he said one day, "and if we lose a few more N.C.O.'s, it will not be long before ye earn a stripe."

Charles glowed but said nothing. A stripe would be a great thing, but in the meantime he was quite happy. He felt justified of himself and of his early knowledge.

A day came when he found himself with his company at ———. They were on the extreme right flank of a British force that had been slowly groping forward, clearing the country as they went. The Germans in this particular spot were not believed to be in force, rumour having it that this flank was being denuded to strengthen the centre. But always they had to go slow to ———. The previous night B Company had been entrenched, and there had

been some fitful sniping; but in the morning word came from Brigade Headquarters that the flank appeared "fairly clear," and that the British line was being drawn in to transfer its activities against the newly strengthened German centre. The enemy had been pushed back so effectively that they were now apparently in a tight corner. Their backs were to a river not half a mile distant, and it seemed they were essaying a desperate effort towards the British left flank, hoping to gain two important bridges and a ford before it was too late. The British right was trying an outflanking movement, and Charles' company was the end of the encircling claw. A strong supporting column of the French was making forced marches from the other side of the river, eager to help in tightening the grip.

At eight o'clock Charles found himself on the crest of a hill dominating a road. The road led to a bridge and was continued across the river for several hundred yards. Then suddenly it dipped and became almost a valley for a quarter of a mile. Next, a bend of a hundred yards, and then it was obscured by a belt of trees. On Charles' side of the river the country was fairly bare of trees, save for a little wood on the opposite side of the road dominating the bridge and precipitous banks. An accurate description of the position by Charles eventually reached his brother.

Big guns had been booming since the dawn. Now and then the rattling *mitrailleuses* were heard, sometimes apparently close at hand, sometimes dying away in the distance. The sound of rifle-fire was intermittent. Battle was joined—had been joined for hours, but the actual stress of conflict had not come in the way of B Company this morning on the flank. They had been feeling their way, and now were resting on the hill-side, feeling, feeling, feeling their way in the flanking movement. Their scouts were out and they were waiting for their report before a fresh advance began, before crossing the road and continuing the march along the river bank. Pipes had been lit—and shared! A stray copy of a ten-days' old newspaper was being discussed. The senior sub was checking an estimated range. Save for the occasional noise of intermittent firing on the left it was a peaceful scene, a bright December morning with a pleasant touch of frost still in the air. Charles pulled out a precious scrap of paper and a pencil-stub, and began to write to Frank . . . Dipcote seemed very far away. . . .

Though he felt sure he could not pass that terrible wood, Errington scudded on and reached the first cycle.

And then one of the scouts came back, suddenly, breathless, with blood running from his cheek. He saluted his company officer and made his quick report.

"Enemy in the wood, sir, in ambush. Me and Private Mathieson got pretty close. . . . They got Mathieson, sir. Skinned my cheek but I dodged the rest."

"Ah!" said Captain Oliver. "Many of 'em?"

"Couldn't be sure, sir; but they seemed to be in force. We ran slap into 'em. I caught sight of a quick-firer, and I think a field-gun, too."

"Any idea how many?"

"Couldn't say, sir. The wood's big enough to hide a battalion or more, but I only saw a couple o' companies. Hadn't time to stop."

"Right. Go and fall in with your section."

The scout retired, and Captain Oliver began to talk to his subs a little apart.

"This is a nuisance," he said quietly, knitting his brows. "Our company isn't enough to carry that wood. We must have support before we advance." He paused, wrote a brief report, and despatched a cyclist. "Pity we haven't a field telephone," he muttered, and then aloud: "I've asked Brigade Headquarters to send us some more—I hope they'll not be too busy. And now . . ." He paused again and looked at his watch. "A nuisance . . ." he repeated, frowning. "A beastly nuisance. . . . What time do you make it, Carruthers?"

The senior sub turned a wrist. "A quarter to nine, sir."

"Yes . . . we must hurry. . . . That sweep hasn't been as clean as we thought. Now, the French column are due in about fifteen minutes if they are not held up *en route*. Coming round that belt of trees they march straight down that valley, up on to the crest, intending to cross the bridge. And then . . . a jolly fine mark for that quick-firer and that field-gun. . . . They'll be hobbled. . . ."

"Unless their scouts are pretty nippy," suggested the junior sub.

"H'm . . . yes . . . and they may get through without spotting 'em. They can't get up to that wood without going across the bridge and making a detour. . . . And the French column as like as not may be too keen. They think—as we thought—that this part was absolutely cleared. They're coming hot-foot to join in the fun. . . . They'll be hobbled if we can't stop 'em."

"Firing's no good. There's too much outside row going on," said Carruthers.

"And we can't helio or flag them till they're on the crest of the hill. The trees and valley will hide them. The crest's too late."

Captain Oliver thought a moment. Then, crisply, "Send up the cyclists."

A moment later the order was given.

"There's an ambush in that wood. You are to go across that bridge and ride on until you meet the French. Stop them at all costs."

The man saluted and wheeled his machine down-hill.

Presently his watching comrades saw him pedalling swiftly along the road. There was no appreciable addition to the intermittent noise: no sound of individual rifles announcing the message of death. But the fascinated eyes of B Company clinging to Private Tetridge as he cycled furiously along the road suddenly saw the figure sway to one side and fall. Man and cycle on the instant lay forlornly on the road.

"Send out another," said Captain Oliver quietly.

Private Hartley had watched the scene even as his comrades. Even as they he had seen and understood. But he received his orders and saluted without a sign of emotion, and in a couple of minutes he, too, was racing along the road.

Those hidden marksmen were shooting well. Private Hartley had the satisfaction of knowing that he had passed his brother cyclist, but that was as much as he received. Twenty yards more grace, and then — another cycle and another gallant soldier lay motionless.

"Any more cyclists?" said Captain Oliver.

"No, sir."

The O.C. looked at his watch. Time was getting precious. Unless by some merciful chance the French had been delayed, they would soon be descending into the valley—the Valley of the Shadow.

"Men," he said, "that message must get through. I want volunteers to run forward singly, one after another as long as we last, mount one of those machines, and warn the French."

And the company stepped forward as one man. Captain Oliver said: "Thank you, men," and chose the nearest. It was Charley Errington.

In a grimly cheerful frame of mind Charles found himself scudding along the road. In a way, he realised that he had no chance of getting through; in a dim way he realised that out of a chain of men running at intervals one *might* succeed. He was not frightened at all. He had been under fire—rifle, shrapnel, and shell—many times since he had reached the front;

and he was accustomed to the droning whine of bullets—hardened—calloused. All he was acutely conscious of now was that he must run and try to get through. A hundred yards of open road . . . dust spurted at his feet . . . he heard the song of triumphant deaths around. . . . Running, running, still untouched . . . and now he was at the first machine. Acutely he was aware of the body of Private Tetridge. . . . He stopped, gasping for breath, picked up the cycle, still untouched, and mounted.

"They haven't got me *yet!*" he thought with a curious surprise. . . . And then he was pedalling, pedalling fiercely to the bridge. . . . And the bullets sang—the bullets sang. "It takes a ton of lead to kill a man!" he thought as he gained the bridge. "What luck! What luck!" He was across—*Fzzsh!* His tunic ripped suddenly, and Charley laughed. *Ping!* one glanced from the handle-bar. There was sprayed dust about him and above as he gained the crest. And then suddenly an immense sensation of quiet as he sank below the crest of the hill. "*Whew!*" he said aloud: "*What luck!* And now I can coast!"

* * * * *

Three weeks later Charles found himself in a base hospital. He was immensely cheerful, for a fractured arm was mending nicely, and shortly he was to be invalided home. As he sat up in bed a Red Cross nurse brought in a letter. It was from his brother Frank. One extract will suffice:—

. . . your show has just got into the papers here, and Dipcote is *wild* with joy. In Big School this morning the Old Man said the school was to have an extra half in honour of it! Will they give you a V.C. or D.S.O. or anything? They *ought* to, anyhow. Will you be home in time for Christmas? I hope so. *Do* come if you can. Mention my name to Sir John French, and I'm sure he'll let you. Hurrah, old chap! A Merry Christmas, anyhow! Oh! and uncle is as pleased as Punch—he sent me a quid to celebrate! I do believe he has kidded himself into the belief that he encouraged you to go into the army! Anyhow, he swears you're cut out for a commission, so I don't think you need worry about the law! Merry Christmas again, old man! Hurrah! *Hurrah!* HURRAH!

Competition for February

"THE OLD FAG'S ALMANACK"

First Prize in each Class: Goods to the Value of One Guinea
Second Prize in each Class: A Book by a Captain Author

THE OLD FAG'S ALMANACK

From time to time the Old Fag records some of the interesting episodes which take place in the CAPTAIN offices. Can you imagine for yourself a few events in the Old Fag's daily life? If so, write them out in the form of an almanack or diary for the month of February, supposed to have been compiled by a member of the CAPTAIN staff. Here is an example:—

February 1st (Monday).—Bask's birthday. O. F. buys him a new collar.

February 2nd (Tuesday).—First spring poet arrives. Bask's new collar not strong enough. "Spring, balmy spring," not lost but gone before.

February 3rd (Wednesday).—O. F. unhappy. Hears from an anonymous correspondent that unless regular articles on "Needlework for Boys" are published "Anon" must give up THE CAPTAIN. O. F. knocks one off printing order.

February 4th (Thursday).—O. F. smiles once more. The publisher reports that in spite of no needlework articles the circulation is still going up.

We want you to treat the whole twenty-eight days in this way, beginning, of course, at February 1st, and not using the examples given.

RULES AND CONDITIONS

1. The name, address, and age of the competitor must be written above his attempt.

2. Competitors will be divided into two classes, comprising those sixteen years of age and over, and those under sixteen respectively.

3. Entries must be received not later than Saturday, February 20th, 1915, addressed to the Competition Editor, THE CAPTAIN, 8, Southampton Street, Strand, London, W.C., the word "Almanack" being written in the top left-hand corner of the envelope.

4. Winners of the first prizes may select goods to the value of one guinea from any firm advertising in THE CAPTAIN.

5. The Editor's decision must be accepted as final.

TWENTY CONSOLATION PRIZES WILL ALSO BE AWARDED

WITH THE GUNS

An Interesting Description of the Marvels of Modern British Artillery

By ARCHIBALD WILLIAMS

A heavy howitzer of the Royal Field Artillery after firing its shell.

WHAT we have been reading about war during the last few months must have brought home to us the terrible capacity for destroying life and property possessed by modern cannon.

A century ago the field gun was a cumbrous weapon, which had to be sponged out after every discharge and loaded at the muzzle with a cartridge and ball or shell, and primed; the whole gun's crew being fully exposed, meanwhile, to the enemy's bullets. When it was fired it kicked so badly that it had to be relaid before it could be fired again, though its useful range was but three thousand yards or so, and its accuracy such as would turn one of our present gunner's hair grey. Compare with it the field gun of to-day. Though little, if anything, heavier than its predecessor, it has three times its range. Semi-automatic breech actions and the use of "fixed" ammunition—charge and shell being united like a huge rifle cartridge—render the work of loading a matter of but a few seconds. Apparatus for absorbing the recoil of the gun has done away with the need for resighting after each shot, and for standing aside when the gun is fired; and the gun-layer can sit on the gun under cover of a shield—and keep it trained while it spits its deadly projectiles in quick succession at a rate of from ten to twenty per minute. Every one of these projectiles, moreover, is far more deadly than those which made day hideous at Waterloo, owing to improvements—save the mark!—in explosives and fuses.

As compared with the rifle, the gun is superior in its range and the number of projectiles which it can scatter in a given time; for a common shell or a shrapnel may be regarded as a number of separate projectiles after the moment of bursting. A good authority has laid it down that a battery of guns can deliver twenty-six thousand shrapnel bullets in one minute, as against fifteen thousand rifle bullets fired by a whole battalion of infantry;

and launch them, too, from a point three or four miles away, on the farther side of a hill, maybe!

FIELD GUNS

The guns which our army takes into the field are the 3in. 13-pounder Q.F. (quick-firer) for use with cavalry (horse artillery), 3.3in. 18-pounder Q.F. for use with infantry (field artillery), the heavy 60-pounder field gun, and the 50-pounder howitzer, besides heavy howitzers and siege guns.

The guns are grouped in batteries of six. A battery of horse artillery has 234 horses and 208 men attached to it, is commanded by a major, and divided into sections of two guns each, each under a lieutenant. A gun is served by thirteen men, most of whom are mounted. A battery of field artillery uses 180 horses and 203 men, and is organised like a horse battery. Nine batteries of field artillery guns are attached to a division (about sixteen thousand men) of the British Army, as well as eighteen howitzers.

THE GUN

We will now give a brief sketch of the details of a field gun. The "body," or tubular part, from which the shell is fired, is about thirty times as long as the bore or calibre, and is rifled internally with a large number of grooves which revolve the shell once during its passage to the muzzle. The object of the rifling is, as the reader may know already, to give the shell a spin round its axis and prevent it turning head over heels during its flight. At the rear of the bore is a long breech chamber closed by a quick-action breech block, which includes apparatus for firing the charge and extracting the empty cartridge shell when the breech is opened.

The gun body has attached to it stout lugs, in which grooves are cut at the sides. It is supported by these lugs in a frame or "cradle," attached to the upper part of the carriage. When the gun is discharged the body pulls back with it a cylinder filled with liquid. A piston inside the cylinder is connected by a rod, passing through a water-tight gland, to the fore part of the cradle. As the cylinder moves, the liquid is forced from one side of the piston to the other through longitudinal grooves cut in the walls of the cylinder. The depth of these grooves decreases towards the front of the cylinder so that the flow becomes smaller and smaller as the piston moves, and is finally stopped altogether. The recoil of the gun is effectually damped by this hydraulic buffer, and by the compression of powerful spiral springs outside the cylinder. The springs run the gun body forward again automatically into the firing position, all jarring at the end of the movement being prevented by a small auxiliary hydraulic buffer. A field gun recoils about forty inches when fired.

Central News

The British 6in. field howitzer which outfought the German 8in. gun. It throws a shell of tremendous weight, and has a very high muzzle velocity.

The cradle is attached to an upper frame, which is able to move horizontally on a lower frame, a vertical pivot holding the two frames together. The lower frame is connected with the main carriage of the gun by trunnions on either side. On the carriage are the axles for the wheels—56ins. in diameter—and the trail, or long tail, which has a big wide spade at the rear end and a lever for moving the trail end sideways in either direction. On the spade and powerful brakes on the wheels falls the duty of preventing the gun backing when fired. The gun is trained or pointed in the right direction by means of traversing gear which turns the upper on the lower carriage; and by the traversing lever already referred to. It is elevated, or moved vertically, by an upright screw attached to cradle and frame and worked by a handgear.

The *sights* are on the left side of the gun, and consist of an "open" sight like those of a rifle, and a telescope with cross wires, the latter for long ranges. The bar supporting the sights is hinged at the front end to the cradle and at the rear end is controlled by gear which enables the gun to be elevated without disturbing the sights. The two gun-layers sit on seats to right and left of the gun. The left-hand man trains the gun and aims it, his fellow works the elevating gear which gives the gun muzzle the correct tilt for the range. Other members of the gun's crew attend to loading and firing, unless the last operation is controlled by the gun-layer.

The 13 and 18 pounder field guns have a useful range of about 6,200yds. (3½ miles), and a flat trajectory, which means that the path of the projectile has but a gentle upward curve. The 5in. gun is effective at ten thousand yards (5¾ miles).

HOWITZERS AND SIEGE GUNS

The howitzer is in general principles similar to the field gun, but has a barrel much shorter in proportion to the bore—is not more than fifteen calibres long. To use cricket parlance, it is a lob bowler, designed to drop shells more vertically than a field gun, and to assail troops behind earthworks and other cover, and keep them there while the infantry force to which it belongs is advancing to the attack. For these purposes it is more useful than the field gun. The body can be tilted up to an angle of 45degs. to the horizontal.

The siege gun is a very large howitzer with a very high angle of fire. As a class it is intended for transport by rail, and usually does not accompany an army into the field. The Germans, however, have sprung a surprise on us with their portable 18in. siege guns, which proved so destructive at Liège and Namur. These monsters move on "caterpillar" wheels, somewhat like those of a Diplock Pedrail, and are hauled by motors. The effects of the high-explosive shell thrown by one of these guns are truly devastating, as many published photographs have shown.

LIMBER AND WAGONS

At the rear end of the trail of a field gun is a large eye, by which the gun is hooked on to its limber, or fore-carriage, for transport. The limber, which carries a small quantity of ammunition, and, in the case of field artillery, has seats for one or two men, is drawn by six horses tandem in pairs, a gunner riding on each near side horse. The weight of gun and limber is about 1½ and 2 tons in the case of the 13½ and 18 pounder weapons respectively; the large guns and howitzers are much heavier, and require more horses to pull them.

Each gun is accompanied by its ammunition wagon, or caisson, which, when the gun comes into action, is drawn up close to it. It is protected in front by steel plates to give additional protection to the men. The rounds of ammunition are stowed away in circular brass-lined pigeon-holes running fore and aft, very conveniently for handling. When the supply is exhausted, a reserve wagon is brought up from the rear and the empty one sent back. The forepart or limber of the wagon can be separated from the body.

PROJECTILES

The two forms of shell ordinarily used in the field are lyddite shell and shrapnel. The first is merely a strong steel case filled with a high explosive which rends the case to pieces and converts it into an infinite number of flying fragments with a capacity for damage proportionate to their respective sizes and weights.

The shrapnel is of just the same shape as the common shell, but has much thinner walls, and the front or pointed part is attached to the cylindrical body by screw threads. Inside it, at the rear end, is a tin box, from which a tube runs along the axis to the nose. Box and tube are filled with the bursting charge of black powder. The space between the tube and the walls of the shell is packed with metal balls, the interstices being filled with resin poured in in a molten condition. The bursting

charge is sufficient to blow off the head of the shell and project the bullets—which may be 250 to 1,000 in number—from the case in a shower of conical shape. When the burst occurs, the released bullets have the speed of the shell as a whole at the moment of bursting, and though their speed falls off much more quickly than that of an unburst shell, it is sufficient to make them effective after a flight of two to three hundred yards. At a distance of 1,500yds. or more the percentage of shrapnel bullets that would damage a body of infantry is probably much higher than that of rifle bullets.

The lighter field guns use shrapnel only; howitzers use lyddite shell primarily and shrapnel on occasion.

yards. The removal of the pin allows a small loose hammer inside to fall back when the shell is launched and to ignite a detonator which lights a ring of slow-burning powder. The length of powder fuse to be burnt before the bursting charge is fired is decided by the setting of the time ring.

If this pin is left in place and another one, marked P, withdrawn, the shell will explode on percussion only. In this case, when the shell leaves the gun the rapid spin withdraws a bolt by centrifugal action and sets free a small hammer which, on the shell striking a hard object, moves forward and fires a detonator.

In practice both pins are usually withdrawn, so that the shell shall burst on impact if it is set to time and the time fuse fails to act.

Gale & Polden.

An artillery gun under cover, showing an officer using a portable telephone.

EXPLODING THE SHELL

The charge in a lyddite shell is ignited, when the shell strikes, by a primer in the nose, which is driven in by the shock. For shrapnel a more complicated fuse, made up of a large number of beautifully finished parts, is employed. It cannot be described clearly in words. Let it suffice, therefore, to say that the revolving of a ring on the outside through part of a circle and the withdrawal of a safety-pin, marked T, will set the shell to explode after it has been in flight for so many seconds—that is, has travelled so many thousand

CARTRIDGES

The cordite driving charge of a Q.F. field gun is enclosed in a brass case of the same shape as that of a rifle cartridge, and the shell is driven tightly into the front end. The charge is fired by exploding a cap in the centre of the back end of the case, with a pin struck by a hammer. Large Q.F. guns have the cartridge separate from the shell to make handling easier. For guns of bores exceeding six inches the brass cartridge case is not employed, but the cordite is enclosed in a bag of silk. To explode the charge a primer, ignited by friction or

electric current, is inserted into a hole in the breech.

GUNS IN ACTION

The position for the guns is selected in advance by the battery commander. It may be an "open" position from which the object to be fired at is visible, or be "covered" by some intervening high ground or other screen.

The guns are brought up and wheeled round to form a line, their muzzles pointed towards the enemy; and their limbers are detached by removing a pin passing through the trail eyes. Horses and limbers are then withdrawn some distance to the rear and brought round with noses towards the guns. Meanwhile the ammunition wagons are driven up close to their respective guns on one side or the other. The teams are unhooked and taken back to the rear.

Machine gun of the 1st Scots Guards.

The range finders get to work with their instruments to calculate the range. The gun-layers elevate their guns accordingly. If the object is visible, they can train their guns "direct," that is, by looking through the sights. If, however, the guns are behind cover, the angle of elevation, with any necessary corrections, is given, the sights are set accordingly, and the gun is raised or lowered until a spirit level shows that the sight bar is perfectly horizontal. In firing from behind cover it is necessary to give each gun the proper direction. Two sticks are set up one behind the other in a line pointing at the mark. An instrument, called a director, is set up, and its sighting bar brought into line with these sticks. The operator then aligns the bar on a dial sight—which also has a sighting bar—fixed on the top of the shield of No. 1 gun, and calls out the angle through which it has been turned. The gun-layer sets his dial sight accordingly and moves his gun until the dial-sight bar points at the director. His gun will then be aimed at the mark. The other guns are trained successively in the same manner.

RANGING

The battery commander now has to make sure that his guns have the correct range, and that the shrapnel is bursting at the proper distance from the enemy, and in the right line. A series of carefully observed shots are fired at different elevations until the shell

is observed to burst or throw up dust close to the target. Two observers stationed a considerable distance apart to right and left of the battery are able to decide, by comparing observations, where a burst occurs relatively to the target.

HOW AEROPLANES AID ARTILLERY

The aeroplane has proved itself very useful both for locating a target invisible from the firing point and directing the fire, as the troops of both sides in the present war know to their cost.

First, as to location of the target: two strips of white cloth are laid some distance apart on ground behind the battery, in the supposed line in which the target lies. The pilot in attendance on the battery commander receives instructions to verify the line and give some idea of the target's distance. He starts up his machine and rises to a safe height—previously agreed upon—behind the battery, and flies out straight towards the object, which his elevation enables him to see. His flight is followed by a director, the sights of which are kept pointed on the machine, and by a range-finder. When the aeroplane is vertically over the target a white light signal is fired by the pilot. The director is clamped to fix the direction, and a mathematical calculation, based on the distance from the range-finder to the aeroplane and the known height of the machine above the ground, gives the horizontal distance of the target. Other means of conveying information are employed, including the dropping of a written note or a marked map.

The battery now opens fire, and the pilot keeps flying to and fro on a line running through guns and target. When the direction of the guns is correct he lets off a red light followed by a green. Next comes the observation of range, conducted while he makes long figures of eight crosswise behind the battery. A red light signifies "too far"; green, "too short"; red and green, "correct." Finally, if shrapnel is being fired, he must signal whether the shells are bursting too far away, too near, or at the right distance from the target.

For signalling from the ground to the aeroplane, strips of white cloth, two yards long and a foot wide, are used to form one or more of the ten letters used in the code. Thus, a big L means "observe for line direction"; X, "observe for range"; F.K., "fresh target, cavalry"; T, "come down."

"SEARCHING" AND "SWEEPING"

The reader probably has come across these words in descriptions of an artillery engagement. "Searching" means distributing projectiles over an area of ground of considerable depth from back to front. This becomes necessary when the object cannot be exactly located, as in the case of a battery placed on the farther side of a hill; or if the target covers a wide area, say a wood known to harbour hostile troops. Searching is effected by altering the elevation of the gun between every two shots.

"Sweeping" implies altering the direction between shots, so that the battery shall attack a wider front than it would cover in the ordinary way. It is effected by using the traversing gear on the gun or spade, and would be employed against infantry occupying long trenches.

The two operations may be combined if the target has considerable length and breath.

THE MAXIM GUN

This, like other machine guns, is a compromise between a rifle and a cannon. It discharges rifle bullets, but at such a rate that it has much the same effect as shrapnel fire.

The maxim is a hideously ingenious contrivance. The barrel is able to move an inch or so backwards and forwards inside an outer case filled with water which prevents it becoming red-hot. The recoil of the barrel and the extension of a compressed spring are made to do a number of operations, including: ejecting the empty cartridge shell, extracting a fresh cartridge from the belt, placing it in the chamber, pulling the belt forward one place, cocking the trigger, firing the cartridge. The operator has merely to keep a button pressed with his thumbs and the gun will spit out bullets at the maximum rate of ten per second as long as it is fed with ammunition. Its range is the same as that of a rifle, and its accuracy even greater. That is to say, an expert can make more hits per hundred bullets than a first-class rifleman. This last statement is based on a competition actually carried out between forty-two marksmen and one machine gun. Each fired for one minute at the same target. The men let off 408 cartridges and made sixty-two hits; while the gun scored sixty-nine hits with 228 rounds.

The standard maxim weighs 60lbs., its tripod stand 48lbs. But a lighter 28lb. pattern is now in use. A couple of maxims are attached to every infantry battalion.

FLAMEHAIR THE SKALD

A Story of the Days when the Norsemen ruled the Seas

By H. BEDFORD JONES ◇ Illustrated by T. Heath Robinson

ALFGAR, called Flamehair from his golden locks, is a young Saxon captured from England by a marauding band of Vikings, who themselves are subsequently beaten at sea by Harald Hardrede, of Norway, whose service Alfgar enters. He proves his worth by a remarkable feat of oar-walking, and also wins the favour of the Norsemen by his skill as a skald, or singer, but incurs the jealousy of one named Svein Arnison.

He learns that Harald, exiled from his own land, of which he is the rightful sovereign, has now decided to return to Norway to regain his throne, travelling first to Kiev, the southern capital of Russia, whose king, Jarisleif, is Harald's firm friend.

The Norse ship, the *Crossbeak*, reaches the shores of the Black Sea, and the party lands. During a hunting expedition in the forest, Alfgar is attacked by Svein, and becomes separated from his companions. Before he can rejoin them he is captured by Tartars, in whose hands he finds another of Harald's men, an English Dane named Hrolf Dagson.

After a few days of captivity the two escape and set out in the direction of Kiev, where they hope to meet Harald. They encounter a pilgrim monk calling himself Basil of the Errand, who tells them that a man and a maid passed him not long before. From his description they know the two to be Svein and Hrolf's own daughter Sigrid, whom Svein has long wished to wed.

They track Svein to a castle, the headquarters of a Tartar tribe whom he has joined. Aided by a rival tribe, Alfgar and Hrolf attack the castle and rescue Sigrid, but Hrolf is killed in the fight.

Alfgar sets out with Sigrid to rejoin Harald and his men.

CHAPTER XVI.

A JOYFUL MEETING.

IT was late in the autumn, and Harald sat in the hall of the great palace of Jarisleif alone. He had pushed on with all speed in the *Crossbeak*, but had arrived at the great city of Kiev only to find that the Russland king was far in the north at his other capital, Holmgarth, which in later days became known as Novgorod.

He had made what search he dared for Alfgar, Hrolf, Svein, and Sigrid, but at length it was concluded that all four had been killed or carried off, and the journey up the Dnieper had been pushed fast.

Upon reaching Kiev, the governor of the city, who knew Harald's friendship with Jarisleif and obeyed him in all things, at once dispatched men and messengers to the south, who had orders to search even to the great steppes, and there to spread among the nomad tribes news of a great reward for the safe return of any of the four. It had grieved Harald sorely, no less than all his men, to lose Alfgar, while the daughter of Hrolf was loved by every man in the band as his own.

But one by one reports had come in of no news, and the governor assured Harald that not until the spring could he hope to regain any captives, if indeed there were any. But Harald had a long and difficult journey north to Holmgarth, and if he delayed until the deep snows it would be increased in difficulty a hundred-fold. To add to his perplexity there had come strange news from Norway, confirming older rumours.

Magnus had been taken for king of all the country. Norway had been under Danish rule for years, and it had been Harald's hope that he might rouse the people to strike for liberty and the old line of Fairhair kings. This Magnus had done before him, but he had also done much more. In a series of great battles with Svein Wulfson, king of Denmark, he had swept him away and brought Denmark under his rule also.

Harald's difficulty was based on a custom

of the Northland. He had, together with Magnus, been bequeathed half the kingdom by Olaf the Holy, before that king's death. But in England and the north of those days, hereditary right counted for little. The king and his jarls, who ruled the land under him, both gained their power in much the same way. A king could only gain the title by being accepted as such by a Thing, or assembly, of the people of some one district; or by the All-thing, or general assembly of the whole country. A jarl could only get his title through being named as such by the king, and neither title was hereditary, as it was in the south. Even in England the same custom prevailed until William of Normandy introduced the rite of coronation.

So now that Magnus was king, with the whole land behind him, Harald would be little better than an outlaw in attacking his rule. The former Varangars, on hearing the news, had held a great meeting and unanimously resolved to follow Harald wherever he led, and many Northmen who were in Kiev had joined the following.

Nevertheless, Harald was torn with indecision. Messages had come from Jarisleif, bidding him hasten on to Holmgarth, and more private ones had come to Harald from Elizabeth the princess. She still waited for him, and urged him to accept part of the realm from her father, who was too old for further conquest and was eager to have the lands of the south subject to him. This seemed to Harald the best thing he could do, but at the same time it seemed to him that to be king in barren Norway was better than to rule all the rich southland. As he was thinking thus, the door of the hall swung open and Eadgar entered, with Haldor.

"No news?" asked Harald.

"None, Harald," replied Eadgar wearily: "It is in my mind that I will remain here and join you later in the north. Save for me the boy is alone in the world, and had I known it sooner I had gone home to England. Now I do not choose to neglect my duty to him; but as for you, Harald, you are killing your chances by waiting here. Let me remain, and if Flamehair or the others appear, I can bring them on."

Harald nodded gloomily. "So be it, friend. Haldor, what think you I had best do in the matter of my kingship? It were easy to hold rule under Jarisleif, but such were a poor end for one of Harald Fairhair's race. Yet it mislikes me to carry war into mine own land of Norway, against my own brother's son."

"Hardrede was never wont to carry war-shield on back," returned the grim Haldor. Harald flushed, and Eadgar hastened to soothe matters over.

"It may well be, Harald, that Magnus will give you half the kingdom, more especially as you have greater wealth than ever king of these lands has owned," he said. "Why not use patience, and send a message to Magnus in the spring, from Holmgarth, to this effect? It were not good to carry a bane-spear against your nephew, king by law."

"That is a good rede," approved Harald with a nod. "When we arrive at Holmgarth, we will——"

He stopped abruptly, listening. From the guardrooms below and from the courtyard of the palace came the sound of shouts, and the corridors seemed filled with running feet. Instantly Harald leaped for his sword, tore the peace-bands from the hilt, and sprang forward with naked blade. The other two were close behind, but before they could get to the door a wild yell pealed up outside and it was burst open.

Into the room rushed, not foes, but a tumultuous, rioting crowd of Varangars whose shouts and war horns raised a terrific din within the palace hall. Harald threatened them angrily, but suddenly he sprang back and dropped his sword, amazement in his face. This changed quickly to wondering delight, as Alfgar and Sigrid leaped down from the shoulders of the Vikings who bore them and ran forward to him.

Tears of joy stood in Harald's eyes, and he clasped Alfgar to him with a fierce hug that told more than his words by far. Sigrid he greeted no less heartily, and after a moment the joyful uproar died down.

"Welcome, my friends, welcome!" he cried. Alfgar had already greeted his uncle, and stood beside Sigrid, flushed and happy. He was bronzed, ragged, and streaked with dust and dirt, as was Sigrid also; but these things mattered little.

"Ulf," shouted Harald, "have the hall set for a feast, and at this Flamehair will tell us the story. Are you both unhurt?"

"Quite, Harald," smiled Sigrid. "We want clean clothes more than aught else just now!"

"Take her to the women, Haldor," commanded Harald. "Do you, Flamehair, come with me. You, too, Eadgar. We will save the story until the feast is set, and a right noble one it shall be. Have you any news of Hrolf and Svein Arnison?"

"Hrolf is dead," replied Alfgar as he followed Harald through a dark corridor to the chief's quarters. "Of Svein I will tell later."

"Dead?" repeated Harald, pointing the Saxon to a bucket of water, which Eadgar dashed over him, and bringing out fresh garments. "Then it is in my mind that he died not alone, for Hrolf was ever a heavy-handed man with weapons."

"In good sooth he did not," rejoined Alfgar, dressing rapidly. "But the tale is a long one. Have you seen aught of Svein?"

"We?" repeated Eadgar in surprise. "Why no! How should we see him?"

"You'll soon hear," laughed Alfgar light-heartedly. It seemed to him that all his troubles were over, but he did not want to tell his story twice, and held silence. Haldor appeared, and in his usual gruff accents said that while the feast was preparing the men desired Alfgar to sing them just one song, in the guardrooms below. To this Alfgar readily assented. Harald smilingly handed him his own harp, and he followed all three down the winding passage. Suddenly a hand plucked at his arm, and the voice of Haldor whispered in his ear.

"Something stirring, lad! Something that will stir Harald to life, for we are in a bad fix, methinks."

Wondering much at these words, Alfgar entered the guardroom. The men hailed him with a yell, and Harald caught the Saxon in his mighty hands, and with a laugh whirled him aloft to a platform of shields, held on the Varangars' shoulders. Alfgar had small time for thought, but he obeyed the behest of Haldor, to his after-regret, by changing an old battle-song to fit the occasion. It was the "Ancient Biarklay" or song of Biark, the "Awakening of the Warriors," and it was met with a yell of delight:—

Day is come up again
Dun the cock's feathers!
'T is time, sons of Vikings,
The toil to be winning.
Wake aye, and wake aye,
Chiefs of the dragons!
All ye of the foremost
Brethren of battle!

Wake ye, hard-gripping,
Hard-loosing Hardrede!
Waken, ye warriors
Who will not of fleeing!
To wine naught I wake you
Dream not of carousing;
To battle I wake you,
To flame of the sword-edge!

To his surprise, Alfgar found the end of the song met with dead silence. As he gazed around in amazement he caught a reproachful glance from Eadgar, then saw that Harald, his eager eyes lit with a fierce light, was holding aloft a hand for silence.

"Comrades! We sail at dawn, in the small boats already prepared. It is settled, and ere the next winter be past we shall be lords of Norway or lords of the dead!"

"Skoal!"

The sudden, fierce shout told Alfgar vaguely that there was something forward which he knew not of, and that look of Eadgar's puzzled and worried him. But there was no time for talk now, and all poured into the large hall, which had been hurriedly decked for a feast such as Northmen loved. Now Alfgar had his first taste of really civilised life as it was in his own day.

The bare hall had been tranformed, with tables down its length, and tapestries and hangings on its walls. Not only were Sigrid and the other Varangar women present, but a number of Russians, the governor, and his captains. All had heard of the termination of the search, and Harald had hastily invited them to a farewell banquet.

Sigrid sat at Harald's right, Alfgar at his left below the governor of Kiev, who in reality was far more of a king than Harald, being governor of the whole south. The meal was attacked with more than the ordinary haste, and at the end Alfgar, at Harald's bidding, rose and related the tale.

"So," he concluded, "it was as well that we did not flee, for the men we had seen coming were Russians, who brought us safely to the river. Here we came up in boats with all speed, and it seems we arrived in the nick of time."

A deep sigh ran round the tables. Not a word had been said during the recital, save for deep mutterings at Svein's conduct, but now Harald sprang to his feet and ordered the leader of the Russians to be brought in. It seemed that the man was already in the hall, and when the promised reward had been paid him, Harald took from his own back a cloak lined with rich furs, and presented it to the captain. Then he turned to Sigrid with a smile, and slipping from his arm a wrought-gold ring, put it on that of the maid.

"That is for the silver ring you lost, maid!" he smiled. "It is in my mind that as you have no kinfolk, I will myself care for you in the place of a father, if that likes you."

"Thanks, Harald," stammered Sigrid, taken somewhat aback by this offer; "the honour is no light one, and much I fear I do not deserve——"

"Say no more," and Harald waved his hand. "From this day you will be as my own daughter. And you, Flamehair—what shall I do for you?"

"Give me a new helm, Harald," laughed the Saxon, "and let me be at your side. I want nothing else, and, indeed, I have done naught to deserve a reward."

Harald smiled but said no more, merely bidding Alfgar to sleep in his own quarters that night. The feast lasted long, interspersed with song and story until Harald and Alfgar withdrew.

"Know you what was in my mind to-night?" asked Hardrede, his hand on the Saxon's shoulder.

"Nay, Harald. What was it?"

"To give you promise that when I am king you shall be jarl."

Suddenly Harald sprang back in amazement and delight, as Alfgar and Sigrid were borne in by a crowd of laughing and shouting Varangars.

"Please, Harald!" protested Alfgar quickly. "That were not a fitting honour for me, who am but a lad in years. Nay, let me but be your friend and I ask no more. Give the jarlships to other men who are wiser and know more of ruling than I."

Here Eadgar entered, bidding Alfgar come with him for a talk, and when Harald had showed him his bed the Saxon left the chambers. Outside, his uncle gripped him suddenly by the shoulder.

"What meant you by that song?" cried Eadgar, anger in his voice. Alfgar explained why he had chosen it, his mind in no little consternation at such words. When he finished, Eadgar dropped his hand.

"Your pardon, lad. I was angry for a moment because you spoiled my peace plan and decided Harald on making trouble for Magnus." He explained the situation to Alfgar hurriedly. "Now Harald, having once made up his mind that the throne shall be his willy-nilly, will take it. If Magnus stands in his way, so much the worse for Magnus. Do you see, lad?"

"Yes," agreed Alfgar soberly enough, "and I am sorry for the song, if it so decided him, as in sooth it seems to have done. However, there is much that may happen before spring, uncle, and Holmgarth, to say nothing of Norway, is a long distance away. In the meantime, we may effect a change yet. And now, good-night."

CHAPTER XVII

AT THE COURT OF JARISLEIF

ALFGAR was sorry indeed not to have seen more of Kiev, for it was a very great and a very famous city, and far more the capital of Jarisleif's empire than was Holmgarth. The great king, however, knew that matters were unsettled on his frontiers, for Magnus of Norway had been stirring up a hornet's nest of Danes and Swedes by his aid. Jarisleif was friendly to the whole race of Harald Fairhair, and had not expected any trouble between the claimants to the throne when he helped Magnus with ships and men, for at that time he knew nothing of Harald Hardrede's intention; nor, for that matter, did anyone else save only Harald himself.

Early in the morning the little army, now swelled by a goodly number of Northmen and former followers of Olaf the Holy dwelling for the time in Kiev, departed. Harald had already prepared a great number of river boats which could easily ascend the shallow waters above, and it was not long before the spires and towers of the city faded away behind them.

Alfgar, his uncle, and Sigrid were in Harald's boat, and as the Vikings formed their own crews, the Saxon found that rowing and poling the flatboat was no light labour. Day after day they travelled with all speed against the swift current. Two weeks after leaving Kiev they found a herd of horses, with litters for the women, waiting for them by Harald's orders, sent long in advance. Here they left the river behind and began the last stretch of the long journey, now on horseback. This suited the Vikings but ill, and many were the grumblings of the horse-weary men. However, it was a desperate fight against winter, and the indomitable Norsemen won. Three days after the first fall of snow, the city of Holmgarth appeared in the distance.

King Jarisleif himself, at the head of a large body of troops, came out to meet them. Alfgar gazed with eager interest on the man who so well deserved his title of "The Great" bestowed by after ages. He was a tall, noble-looking man, grey of hair and beard, clad in armour poorer than that of his own men, and he greeted Harald as a brother. The two chiefs met on foot and embraced, then entered the city together. Holmgarth was a poor enough city after Tsargrad and Kiev, but its people were friendly, many of Harald's party seemed well known there, and Alfgar anticipated a good rest and no little enjoyment during that coming winter.

He, with Eadgar and the other personal friends of Harald, was assigned quarters in the wooden-and-turf buildings which constituted the palace of Jarisleif. Of old Atli Farseer he had seen little during the trip from Kiev, Atli having been busied with the pilots in the leading boat.

That same night Alfgar saw Elizabeth, or Ellisif, as the Northmen called her, for the first time. The daughter of Jarisleif was not so young as he had thought of her, and he forgot that she had not seen Harald for nearly ten years; she was, in fact, of Harald's own age. The people loved her, and it was an open secret that she and Harald had long been in love.

After the first few days of getting settled, Alfgar and his uncle spent most of their time in the city. Holmgarth was the great merchant town of the northland, being the centre of commerce between Byzantium and the northern countries. They even found numbers of Englishmen, both Saxons and Danes, for the races were by this time well mingled, and with these Eadgar held long conversations while Alfgar listened with intense interest.

"Things are not so well with England," said the latest-arrived of these, an outlawed Saxon from Wessex. "Edward is a good enough king, it may be, but he seems to have lost the vim and dash which won the throne for him, and seems to grow more and more into monkish ways. Then there are numbers

of Norman-French at his court—which may be only natural, considering his life in Normandy—but which is misliked at home."

"But is the land itself at peace?" asked Eadgar. "I have good store of booty won in the south under Harald, and if there are no disturbances, no pretenders to the throne, and if the realm is strongly ruled, I would like to end my days among my own people, on my family's land."

"Then best stay away," returned the Saxon, bluntly. "Jarl Godwin is of high race and is a great man, his daughter having married King Edward; but his sons are an evil race, young though they be, and promise to stir up great mischief in the days to come. It may well be that when Edward dies the throne will be vacant, and they will contest for it; or Svein the Dane may claim it, or your own Harald, or anyone who has the power to lay hold upon it. Best keep your goods out of England, Eadgar, for the evil day is sure to come sooner or later."

The two Saxons heard him with a sigh, and when they had left the inn at which their gatherings took place, Alfgar asked his uncle if the man was not rendered over-bitter by his exile.

"No, I think not," said Eadgar, thoughtfully. "Edward has been but three years king in England, having lived long in exile; and although men call him 'The Good,' it is not as they called King Knut 'The Good.' Of course I know nothing of these sons of Jarl Godwin, but Godwin himself is a proud man and mighty as I remember him. And if Edward dies without children, the throne may well go to the strongest of the many who can show some faint claim. However, time will prove that, and for the present we have enough to busy us with Harald's attempt on Norway."

Winter came on fast and hard, and to Alfgar, who had never witnessed a real northern winter, it was very wonderful and quite as disagreeable. He soon learned to bundle himself up in furs, however, as did Eadgar, and there were plenty of others in the town to whom this Russian winter was quite as strange. During these winter months Alfgar saw little of Sigrid. In common with the other women, she took part in the sports, such as bear and wolf hunting, and joined heartily in the festivities, but save on one or two occasions he did not see her in private.

Alfgar, however, had little time to bother with festivities. Owing to his knowledge of reading and writing, which few indeed possessed outside of the priests at the court, he was kept busy both by Harald and Jarisleif himself.

The wedding of Harald and Elizabeth was to take place just as soon as Harald's accounts with the king were settled up. Now these were no light matters, as Alfgar found. For years past Harald had been sending all manner of booty back to Jarisleif to be kept for him. A shipload at a time, well guarded from pirates of the Black Sea and the rivers, had left Byzantium for the north; out of them all only one had been lost by wreck.

Alfgar represented Harald as the vast stores of spoil were checked off and appraised by merchants of the town, who were eager to buy the rich silks and costly stuffs of the East. There was a goodly store of the richest of armour and weapons, and with this Harald equipped the Varangars, who were to be the nucleus of his army, and who would form his own crew when the sailing-time came. The Varangar chief had three times been present at what was called "polute-svarf," a custom by which the Varangars, on the death of a Greek Emperor, had the liberty of entering his palaces and taking all that they could carry away. In this manner Eadgar, as well as the other men, had gained much wealth.

Harald, however, had no use for anything but hard cash, and gave Alfgar orders to sell everything possible to the merchants. Jarisleif appointed a "court" of three respectable merchant-citizens, who adjudged the value of the different articles. It was many weeks before this work came to an end, and every day Alfgar grew more amazed at the great stream of gold pouring into Harald's coffers. It was in truth the ransom of a kingdom, and when to it was added the dowry of Elizabeth, the landless Harald was richer in gold than Jarisleif himself.

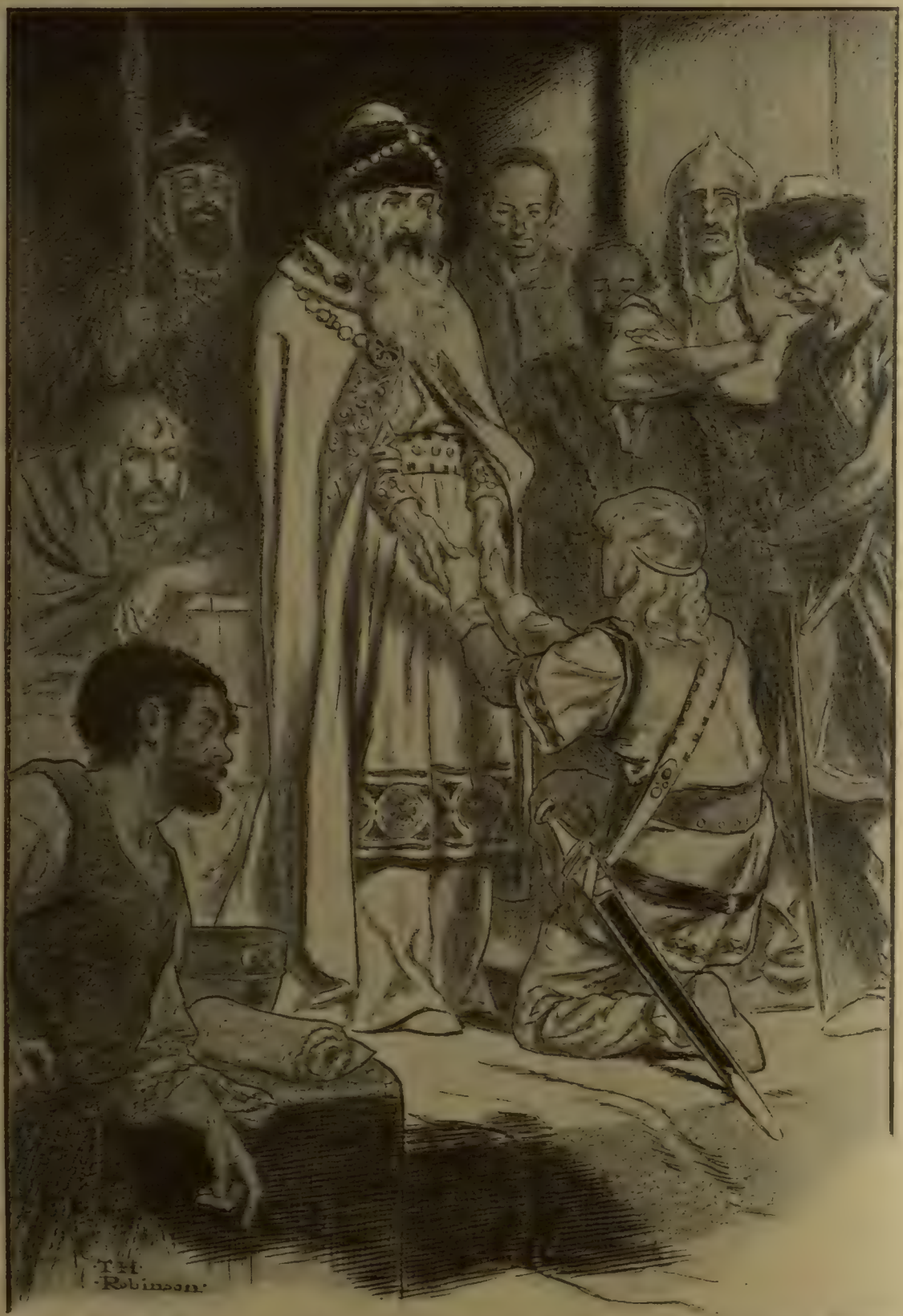
The wedding was celebrated with great festivities, Russian nobles arriving for weeks beforehand from all the country round about. These were for the most part rough, turbulent fellows, much like the Vikings themselves, and although Jarisleif's code of laws suited them but ill, the king enforced order with an iron hand. Both the Russian and Norse skalds were in high fettle, and Alfgar received a golden arm-ring from Jarisleif for a song telling of Harald's life and great deeds, which he sung in Jarisleif's hall on the night of the wedding.

One morning, some two weeks after the marriage, Harald sent for his skald, and Alfgar found him in the great hall, alone. The palace assigned to Harald as a residence was almost as large as that of the king himself, and Alfgar was surprised at not finding any of the Vikings with Harald, who was little given to lonely musing.

"Flamehair," began Hardrede, pacing up and down restlessly, "have you noted any strange faces in the town of late?"

Alfgar stared at him, astonished. "Why," he replied, with a laugh, "there have been so many strange faces here that——"

"Tush!" broke in Harald, impatiently.



As in a dream the Saxon went to his knees to receive the honour from the great king, amid a deep murmur of amazement from the captains around.

"Let me come to the point. Have you noted any men who seemed to you to appear other than they were in reality? Nay, I am not jesting, lad! This is serious."

"I have seen none such," replied Alfgar at once. "But I heard my uncle say yesterday that there was a man selling arms in the bazaars who had newly arrived, and who looked more like a Viking than a merchant."

"Good!" cried Harald, and held out a bit of wood, scratched with the runic characters of the Norsemen. "Can you read runes, Flamehair?"

The Saxon looked at it and shook his head. Runic writing was an art in itself, and none but the initiated could read it.

"Then I will read it," replied Harald. "It says this: 'If Harald Sigurdson would grip Norway fast, let him seek out new weapons.' From the characters, I would say it came from Danish hands. It was left on the threshold of my chamber last night, Flamehair, and it seemed to me there was more in the words than might easily appear. Then it occurred to me that there might be someone in the town who wished to communicate with me in secret. Your news points clearly to this armour-dealer. Take this bit of wood, go to his shop, and let him see it as if by accident. Then act as may seem best to you. If he wishes to see me, bring him here after dark to-night."

Placing the message securely in his girdle, Alfgar left the palace. He knew where the shop of the new dealer in arms was located, and presently found himself in the presence of the man himself, a stalwart, eager-eyed fellow whose face had little of the merchant in it.

The shop, like all the rest, was closed in against the weather. Waiting until one or two Vikings had departed, Alfgar began to inspect the weapons offered for sale. It seemed to him that the dealer cared little whether he bought or not, and this confirmed his suspicion. As if by accident, Alfgar loosened his girdle and the bit of inscribed wood fell out. The Saxon picked it up again carelessly, and as he did so the dealer, with a keen look, addressed him.

"Friend, come you from the palace?"

"And if I did?" returned Alfgar, cautiously, abandoning all pretence of buying. The dealer laughed.

"There is a man there I would fain see," he said. "Could you get me past the guard, think you?"

"That depends," returned Alfgar. "Who is the man?"

"He who gave you that bit of wood," and now the dealer's eyes were keen and cold.

"I will come for you at nightfall," answered Alfgar, shortly, and receiving a quiet nod he wrapped his cloak about him and left the shop. Full of excitement at what this might portend, he reported the result of his mission without delay. Harald nodded thoughtfully.

"I will be waiting, Flamehair. Best to have a dagger in readiness, for your sword will be in its peace-bands, and should the man prove to be an assassin quick action were necessary."

"An assassin!" echoed Alfgar, in dismay. "Surely that is impossible, Harald! Why, who would send him?"

"Magnus, for one," smiled Hardrede. "Although, to say sooth, I do not believe it of him. Still, it is many years since he knew me and I him. However, be in readiness, and we will see."

Full of disquietude at these words, Alfgar spent the rest of the day in wandering about the town and thinking. In the evening he went again to the shop, and at his first knock the dealer appeared, wrapped to the eyes in a mantle. He recognised Alfgar, and without a word fell into step at the side of the Saxon. A word from Alfgar gained them ready admittance to the palace, and a moment later they were in the hall, where Harald sat alone on his high seat. The man dropped his mantle and strode forward; below the high seat he dropped to one knee, Alfgar watching him warily.

"My lord Harald," said the dealer in arms, "my name is Ivar Grimson, of Thiodir in Denmark, and I come to you with a message from King Svein Wulfson."

CHAPTER XVIII

HOW FLAMEHAIR WENT TO KING SVEIN

FOR a long moment there was silence, while Harald searched the face of Ivar through and through. Finally he held out his hand.

"Rise, Ivar," he answered curtly. "This is my skald who guided you hither. You may speak freely before him, or else go your ways in peace."

"Now I see that you are truly named 'Hardrede,'" Ivar made answer smilingly, and as he flung aside his cloak Alfgar saw that he was clad in fit guise to speak with kings.

"This is my message, Harald Sigurdson. At the death of King Knut the Great and his son Harald, your nephew Magnus made pact with the other son, Hordaknut, whom he had turned out of Norway, that at the death of either the other should rule his lands. Thereupon Hordaknut died and Magnus ruled Denmark, renouncing England to Edward the Good.

"Magnus appointed Svein Wulfsun, Jarl of Denmark, to rule the land. But Svein, being of the blood of Svein Forkbeard and King Knut, rebelled and was made king of his own

land. Then came Magnus against him, and after many battles King Svein was driven to seek refuge in Sweden with King Olaf.

"Now it stands, Harald, that your nephew Magnus rules in Norway, which is of right your realm, and likewise rules in Denmark, of right belonging to Svein Wulfson. I, with others, had fled to Sweden with King Svein, and there word came to us that you were making ready to go against King Magnus. Therefore King Svein bids you join him, if such be your will, and that you go together with a great host, you to rule Norway, and he to rule Denmark."

Ivar ceased, and Harald made no answer, gazing ever at the darkness over the Dane's head. Alfgar, watching intently, was surprised when Harald turned to him suddenly.

"Flamehair, what think you of this?"

"I know little of it, Harald," replied the Saxon. "But it seems to me that if King Svein rebelled against the man whose Jarl he was he might deal unfairly with another."

A flush crossed Ivar's dark face at this thinly veiled insult, but Harald appeared well pleased, and checked the retort of the Dane.

"Hold, Ivar! Flamehair speaks naught but truth, for methinks it was not a good deed when Svein rebelled, having placed his hands between those of a king. That is of little moment, however. How came you here?"

"Svein is at Sigtun with King Olaf," returned Ivar. "From there I came to Aldegiaburg, Jarisleif's Baltic port, by ship, with much peril and hardship. Thence I came by sled."

"Then it is in my mind that you can return the same way," said Harald, drily. Ivar started in surprise, but the Varangar chief continued, "With you I will send Flamehair here, to bear a message from me."

"But can I not take the message, lord?" inquired Ivar, wondering. Alfgar was listening eagerly, curious as to what was passing in his leader's brain.

"Nay, I will send my own messenger to do King Svein honour," smiled Harald, smoothly, "and perchance he will make a song to sing before the king. But enough. Do you return to your booth, and make ready to depart two days hence."

Ivar bowed, flashed a half-humorous glance at Alfgar, and wrapped his cloak around him once more as he passed through the door. Once they were alone Alfgar turned to Harald.

"Were you in earnest?" he asked, eagerly enough. "Are you really going to send me to Svein as a messenger?"

"I think so, Flamehair," laughed Harald, throwing his arm about the shoulders of the Saxon affectionately—a rare emotion for Harald to display. "But before I do what is in my mind, I must see Jarisleif. Go you to him and ask that he receive me at once."

Wondering more than ever, Alfgar hastened to the king's palace and delivered his message to Jarisleif, who was busied with his scribes. The king bade him bring Harald without delay, and in a few moments he returned with the Norse leader.

Harald advanced to Jarisleif and sat by his side, tugging at his yellow moustache. At length he spoke.

"Jarisleif, you know that I am but a landless man, not yet king. I wish to ask a favour from you."

"It is granted before you ask," smiled the stately old ruler, his hand resting a moment on Harald's shoulder.

"But first," requested Harald, "will you send one of these men for my captains, and one or two of your leaders?" The man was dispatched, and Harald went on: "The request is no light one, Jarisleif. A messenger reached me this even from King Svein."

Jarisleif said nothing, only his quick frown betraying his surprise.

"I am minded to send Flamehair, here, with a return message," went on the Viking steadily. "I trust him more than any other, but I would that he were more than a skald. Jarisleif, I ask that you give him the rank of Jarl—not with lands, but the rank only."

"What!" Alfgar leaped to his feet in amazement, staring. Jarisleif turned his keen black eyes on him, and the Saxon, confused and helpless, paused. At this moment the captains trooped in and ranged themselves about the room in no little perplexity as to the reason for this summons. Jarisleif, who had said nothing, rose to his feet and held out both hands to Alfgar.

As in a dream, the Saxon went to his knees and placed his two hands between those of the great king. Then the latter broke silence, his voice ringing deep and sonorous in the chamber.

"Alfgar of England, surnamed Flamehair, do you swear that even as your hands are between my hands, so your faith will be given me; that you will be true to me and to my son Harald Sigurdson in all things; and that never will you take up arms against me or against him?"

"I swear," returned Alfgar, amid a deep murmur of amazement from the captains around.

"Then you are my man and Harald's man, and hereto I give you Jarl's name, Alfgar of England!"

And with this Jarisleif pulled Alfgar to his feet, caught up a cloak of rich furs that lay beside him, and flung it over the shoulders of the new Jarl.

"Take this as my Jarl-gift," he continued, "and you, friends, witness the oath sworn but now."

"And take this as my Jarl-gift, Flamehair!" cried Harald, throwing his own sword-belt and weapon about Alfgar's waist. Scarce daring to deem it true, Alfgar caught at the firm hands and held them.

"Harald!" he exclaimed, feeling a swift exhilaration in his heart, although his voice trembled at first. "I thank you, and you too, King Jarisleif. I only wish that I were older or more worthy of this honour, which comes to few men——"

"Peace!" laughed Harald, exuberantly, catching up a deer's-horn of ale from a table near by. "Years will come soon enough, lad, and as for worth—none of those who left Tsargrad with me will dare dispute that! Skoal to Jarl Alfgar! Skoal to Jarl Flamehair!"

"Skoal! Skoal! Was-hael! Was-hael!" Not a voice among those that rang forth the shout held a dissenting note, Jarisleif himself speeding the cry, and Alfgar felt a sudden thrill of gladness that these, men among men, deemed him worthy such honour. A moment later Harald had drawn him away, and they were walking back to the other palace.

"You should not have done this thing," began Alfgar, when they were in the open air. "I have no lands, no great kin——"

"Silence, Jarl! It is done, and by morning all men will know it. Now give close heed to me, for it may be that you will have to earn the honour dearly enough, and that before long."

Soon they had regained Harald's hall, and here Alfgar learned for the first time what was in the mind of his chief.

"You will go with Ivar Grimson to King Svein. Find out what manner of man he is, and if folk deem him a faith-breaker or not. Openly, tell him that I will make a forth-faring this summer, and will join him at Sigtun should nothing prevent. Bid him gather a host and keep matters as quiet as may be.

"But in private inquire as to what manner of man King Magnus is grown to be. Jarisleif and our friends here, who know Magnus well, praise him over-much, to my mind; here we have heard only good of him, and I would fain know what the Swede-folk think. Now, I would fain come to terms with Magnus, if that may be, but Svein must know nothing of it. With you on this journey take Sigurd Thick, my tooth-thrall. To him will I give a letter bidding Magnus give me my half of the realm, or what he will of it. At Sigtun send Sigurd secretly to make his way over the Dales to King Magnus with this letter. Wait for an answer as long as may be, and if none come then we will make war. You can trust Sigurd to the death, for thrall though he be, he is devoted to me."

Now Alfgar discerned the plan of Harald in its entirety. Hardrede was playing for time, trying to find which of the two kings was the more worthy to be trusted. Svein was said to have all the power of the Swedish King Olaf behind him; if Harald joined with him the overthrow of Magnus was almost certain. But no word of cousinly greeting had come from King Magnus, and unless it came through this message borne by Sigurd Thick, there was little likelihood of any coming at all.

Harald had not acted carelessly in picking Alfgar, in spite of the Saxon's youth. In appearance Alfgar was now a man in all things save the flowing Viking beard. He had broadened out amazingly, and the hardships of that stern journey from Byzantium had given him a resolute and determined air which fitted him well. Moreover, most of the men about Harald were blunt, hard-hitting warriors, little suited for work requiring any delicacy such as this, while Alfgar had a singularly graceful and winning air which was quick to make him friends.

Eadgar greeted him when he returned late that night with a shout of amazement, holding him at arm's length and gazing at him.

"A Jarl!" cried the old Saxon warrior. "One of my race a very Jarl—the equal in rank of Godwin himself! Why, it is well-nigh unbelievable!"

"Nonsense," laughed Alfgar, tearing himself free, and seizing his uncle in turn. "Congratulate me, instead of staring as if I were moonstruck, or some strange beast! In sooth, uncle, it is hard for me to believe myself, yet it is true. Now listen."

Therewith he told Eadgar something of his mission, and they sat talking until a late hour. Eadgar was wise in the ways of men and courts, and had Alfgar carried out half his instructions he would have done well indeed.

When he went abroad in the town next morning he received the first evidence that his new rank was in truth no dream. The cloak and sword, princely gifts both, were greatly admired, but Alfgar found that the old good-fellowship of the men was somewhat gone now. No longer was he a skald, one of themselves, but he had become a powerful man overnight, even though he was landless. But there were lands for the winning, as old Atli Farseer gruffly told him, and under Harald Hardrede it would go ill but a landless Jarl would make his fortune soon enough.

That afternoon Alfgar said good-bye to Sigrid. She made much fun of his rank, pretending to be greatly in awe of him; but when the time for parting came all this vanished, and she held out her hands to him in farewell.

"You will prove worthy, Flamehair," she said softly. "Whatever betides, remember me as your friend. See, here is my Jarl-gift for you." And she held out new peace-bands

for his sword, wrought with embroidery. "I had been making them for some time, and finished them but a day since." Then she bound them on his new weapon, and they said farewell.

That evening was a busy one indeed for the new Jarl. He met Sigurd Thick, a thrall given Harald when, as a babe, he had cut his first tooth, this being the custom of the North. Sigurd was very old and very thick, or fat as we would say; but he was faithful and honest, and as Alfgar knew him well he had no fears for that part of the errand. Ostensibly, Sigurd was his attendant, though Ivar Grimson the Dane remarked with a shrug that the new Jarl was a poor judge of men, it seemed.

But Ivar's opinion did not worry Alfgar over-much. On the morning following they set forth by sled, and after a quick and uneventful journey reached the seaport. There Ivar's ship was waiting for them, and although the wintry season did not favour voyages, their passage to Sweden was by no means a bad one, and at length Jarl Alfgar came to Sigtun, where dwelt the Swedish king—Sigtun the Ancient, not far from the present Stockholm; and his work was begun.

CHAPTER XIX

WHAT BEFELL AT SIGTÚN

THE last part of the journey, from the sea to Sigtun—for the lakes were frozen, as was the sea edge—was made on skis. Fortunately for Alfgar, he had learned how to use these while at Holmgarth, for they were in general use among Russians and Northmen.

Word had not been carried ahead of them, so when they arrived at the quarters of King Svein the men on guard gave a shout of surprise, and it seemed to Alfgar that Ivar must be some great person, for they treated him with no little favour. They were bidden to wait in a room for the King, and Alfgar was surprised at its bareness. Accustomed as he had become to the fine surroundings of Jarisleif's town, the bare rooms and rickety buildings of Sigtun were his first introduction to the conditions of the barren Scandinavian countries.

They had not long to wait, and presently a tall, broad-shouldered man, with flowing yellow hair and beard, appeared in the doorway and gave Ivar a warm greeting. Ivar presented Jarl Alfgar, and the Saxon was able to form his first opinion of King Svein.

And it was undeniably a favourable one. Svein was one of "the most goodly of men," as the chroniclers tell us, and his frank, open face and genial greeting put Alfgar at his ease without delay. The young Saxon had yet to learn that guile is often hidden behind frank faces, but he was delighted with Svein's appearance and manner.

"Are you not somewhat young to be a Jarl?" he smiled, inspecting Alfgar curiously. "I knew not that Harald had received king's title."

"Yes, I am indeed young," replied Alfgar. "But I had Jarl's-name from King Jarisleif, although I am Harald's man. Now, Svein, Harald has given me letters——"

"Let them rest," broke in Svein quickly, taking Alfgar's arm, and darting a quick glance at Ivar, which the Saxon did not see. "Come with me to my uncle and we will beg from him a fitting residence for you. How go matters with Harald?"

"Well enough," returned Alfgar, accompanying Svein from the room into a corridor. "Men are gathering to him, but he refuses to take those of Russia. He wishes to regain his throne by Norsemen——"

He paused suddenly as they entered a long hall, filled with men. At the farther end were two high seats, and here they found King Olaf of Sweden, who spent a good share of his time with Svein. A mutter of wonder and curiosity went up from the warriors when Alfgar appeared, his golden-red hair streaming over his rich armour and fur cloak, and Olaf stared at him as they approached.

"Who is this, Svein?" he spoke, in a high-pitched voice that contrasted strangely with his heavy build and ox-like face. "Who is this that comes in the likeness of the God Baldur?"

Alfgar said nothing, and Svein replied:

"This is Jarl Flamehair, Olaf, a man of Harald Sigurdson's, sent hither with messages to me. It seems most like that Harald and I will go against Magnus this year. Olaf, I ask fitting quarters and attendance for Jarl Flamehair!"

"And right gladly will I furnish them," was the warm greeting given Alfgar, as the eyes of the Swedish king swept over him again. "Welcome, Jarl, to Sigtun! Did you bring men with you?"

"I came alone, Olaf," returned Alfgar easily, "save for a freed thrall, who waits with the men of Ivar."

"By Thor," exclaimed Olaf, "if all the men of Hardrede are like this man, Svein, it is in my mind that he will have little need of help to win back the throne of his fathers!"

Alfgar flushed at the frank admiration, and as he glanced at Svein caught a swift flare in the eyes of the Dane—an expression that was no quicker come than gone, but the look puzzled Alfgar. King Olaf called one of his men, issued rapid instructions, and turned to his guests.

"Svein, if you and Flamehair will follow Svart here, you will find quarters speedily."

Still arm in arm, the landless king and the

landless jarl thanked Olaf and followed Svart. Outside Ivar and the rest rejoined them, and in no long time Alfgar was settled in a comfortable enough out-hall of the Swedish king's palace. Here Svein left Alfgar, after telling him to come to the palace that night and deliver his letters.

"Well, what think you of the Dane king, Sigurd?" asked Alfgar when he and Harald's thrall were once more alone together. Sigurd Thick was a man of slow speech and few words, and he hesitated long before replying.

"He is fair-seeming, Jarl. But my rede is that we trust him not over-much. I think I will get my bane from his hand."

"Nonsense!" laughed Alfgar, surprised. "Why should he seek your life, Sigurd Thick? In sooth, methought his face and words alike were true."

The thrall shrugged his shoulders. "Have it your way, then. I have said my say."

That same night Alfgar visited Svein once more and found him alone. The message was delivered, and Svein pondered it long in silence. Studying the man as he sat there, Alfgar could not but dismiss Sigurd's fears as not worthy consideration. Finally the king replied.

"Jarl, this message pleases me well. It is now nearly spring, and as soon as may be I will begin to gather men, and see what force can be raised. How would it suit you to remain here for a time as my guest, and then carry word to Harald of what befalls, so that we may agree upon a meeting?"

This exactly suited Alfgar's instructions. "It is a good rede, King Svein," he replied, joyfully. "The trip hither was too long and arduous for my liking, and if I can serve you I will do so." Thereupon he asked leave for Sigurd Thick to travel overland with the next party that left the city, explaining that the man wished to visit his family in Norway. This story had been agreed upon, and Sigurd's thrall-collar had been removed to lend it colour. As Alfgar spoke, he saw that Svein was playing with a little knife that hung at his belt.

"Surely, Jarl," answered Svein, carelessly. "I will arrange it, so give it no more thought."

It was now well on towards spring, and a week later Sigurd Thick departed. Oddly enough, Alfgar noticed one day that the little knife no longer swung at the king's belt, and he idly asked Svein what had become of it.

"That?" answered Svein, with a laugh. "Oh, I gave it to your fellow Sigurd, the day he left. He rendered me a small service, and in payment thereof I gave him the knife."

Alfgar started. Had the thrall been unfaithful? Was the "small service" a betrayal of Harald's letter to Magnus? But no, that could not be; Harald trusted the thrall absolutely, and Sigurd had naught to gain save from Harald, so Alfgar thought no more of it. The thrall had left with a company of cheaping-men, who were taking goods to sell in Norway over the mountains, and by now was well on his way.

So the days lengthened, and happily enough for the Saxon. King Svein kept him busy meeting great men of the court and getting in shape an account of what ships and men Olaf allowed him. The Swedish king made a frank offer of all his strength, but this Svein refused to accept. There were many Danes, fugitives from the rule of King Magnus, who had fled to Sigtun with Svein, and for the rest Svein wished a select force of picked men and ships, that would compare favourably with those of Harald.

But through all the weeks that followed, Alfgar did not forget his real errand. Harald was by no means inclined to an alliance against his nephew could he get good terms from Magnus, and Alfgar kept busily at work among the Norsemen and others at the Swedish capital trying to find out just what kind of man Magnus was.

His reports were conflicting. All agreed that Magnus was a great warrior. Svein had lost battle after battle to him, and Svein was no coward. But as to trusting him, which was the chief thing, he gained various opinions. The Norsemen seemed to like Magnus, but on more than one occasion Svein flung out statements that placed Magnus in a very different light, telling Alfgar of his former dealings with the Norse king and of treacherous dealings he had met with at the hands of Magnus. His jarls, too, said much the same thing, and Alfgar soon came to believe that dealings with Magnus were not like to be profitable.

As to Svein himself, Alfgar never doubted him for an instant. Often he was tempted to tell him of his real errand and assure him that he was fully satisfied that Harald should join forces with him, but his better judgment held him back from this step, for which he was thankful later. The general opinion about Svein was that he was a skilful warrior and a strong ruler, but somewhat unlucky in his battles with Magnus. Alfgar found that few men in Sigtun, however, cared to express themselves openly on Svein. They gave him fair words enough, but always seemed to keep something back, to speak with a certain restraint that puzzled the Saxon.

What could it be? To him, Svein seemed almost as ideal a king as Harald Hardrede himself; not as tall, for Harald was near seven feet in height, but open-handed and open-hearted above most men. Only at times there would come a certain baffling expression across the king's face, an expression that seemed to Alfgar to be like a curtain hiding the thoughts behind. But this was a little thing, and on the

whole Alfgar liked and admired King Svein with all his heart.

One day came word that Harald lay sick in Russia, and that the mustering would be delayed perforce. Spring had come and well-nigh gone, and Alfgar began to worry about Sigurd Thick. That the thrall had played traitor he did not believe; Svein could never have concealed the matter, he concluded, and besides, was not Svein his friend and helper in all things? It was time that Sigurd had returned, and more than time, and he began to think of returning himself to Harald. But the way of this returning did not come as he had looked for it.

One day King Svein, flushed and in disorder, came to Alfgar's quarters in great haste and summoned him.

"Come quickly, Jarl! There be men here with news of your fellow Sigurd, and ill news of Magnus."

Alfgar sprang to the door after Svein, crying out questions eagerly.

"They be two of the cheaping-men who departed with him," explained the Danish king as they hastened along. "Here is their dwelling—let us have them out." He raised his voice and called out, whereat the two men in question left the house and stood before them.

"Tell Jarl Alfgar the tale you told me," commanded Svein. Alfgar was watching the men expectantly, and although he liked their looks ill, he was impatient for the tidings. Finally one of them spoke up.

"It was after we had reached the Thrandheim dales, lord," he said, his eyes shifting from face to face. "There we came upon King Magnus at a large farmstead, and paused to sell his men goods. The same evening the man called Sigurd Thick, who came west with us, had business with Magnus for long. Magnus seemed somewhat angry, and next morning the body of Sigurd Thick lay in the courtyard with an axe wound in its head. That is all we know, lord."

"More of Magnus' work," sneered Svein as the man finished. "Thanks, friends, for the tale. Come, Jarl." He drew the horror-struck Saxon gently away, and they walked home in silence. Alfgar was overcome by this tragic ending to the mission of Sigurd. No doubt Magnus had slain him in anger, or perhaps the thrall had provoked him. In any case, there was nothing more to keep him at Sigtun, and with a heavy heart Alfgar made ready to bear King Svein's message of fellowship to Harald, who lay with his men at the Russian port of Aldeigiaburg.

Two days later, a vessel not being then ready in the harbour, Alfgar borrowed a horse and went forth into the country for a ride by himself. He wanted to think things over, and without directing his steed let the animal follow the western road, commonly used by cheaping-men and farmers. Striking through the rich fields near the town, he came to a more rugged country, and after a time struck aside from the road and drew up beneath a lofty pine, a landmark for miles around. Dismounting here, he threw himself on the fresh young grass to rest.

As he did so, something caught his eye—a gleam from the grass at the roots of the great tree, where a little snow still lingered in the shadow. The young Jarl idly arose and strolled over. To his surprise, he saw that it was the gleam of gold, and as the object resisted his fingers, he took out his knife and dug around it—to spring back with a cry of amazement.

There in the grass lay a gold-hilted knife—the knife that had swung at King Svein's girdle weeks before! And, loose in the grass and snow, lay white objects that struck horror to Alfgar's heart. Leaning over, he snatched up the little knife, together with a scratched bit of wood beside it, and with a shudder leaped to the saddle. Digging the spurs deep, he rode madly away from the spot where lay the bones of Sigurd Thick—slain by no men of Magnus, but barely an hour's ride from Sigtun town itself!

CHAPTER XX

ALFGAR GOES A-VOYAGING

WHERE Alfgar went on that wild ride he never knew. His only thought was a mad frenzy of escape, escape from the horror behind him, the smiling horror that bore the name of king. For suddenly it all rushed over him. Svein's smooth words came back to him:—

"I gave it to your fellow Sigurd the day he left!"

But how the knife had been given Svein had not said. Now Alfgar knew the "small service" rendered by Sigurd, the faithful thrall! He could almost see the scene—Sigurd, doubtless led off the road by some ruse, floundering through the deep snow to the pine, perchance stabbed in the back—and then flung into the snowdrifts. And Harald's letter?

Alfgar came to himself with a groan of rage and dismay. All the time Svein had known that Harald wished peace with his cousin! And all the time Svein had been giving him false words, trying to make him report ill of Magnus, trying to cause an open breach between the Norsemen!

Suddenly he drew rein and looked down at the things in his hand. He had been spurring wildly along the road, and just beyond

were a little group of cheaping-men, staring at him as if they thought him daft. But what was that bit of wood he had picked up with the knife? There were scratches on it—runic scratches! Although he could read them not, Alfgar almost sensed their import. Slipping from the saddle, he ran to the four merchants standing in front of their cart of goods.

"Can any of you read runes?" he cried. One of them nodded surlily, and Alfgar thrust the bit of wood into his hand. "Read that for me."

The man looked at it. Then a flash of fear sword in its sheath, he rewound the peace-bands, his rage vanishing as quickly as it had risen.

"Thanks, merchant," he returned, quietly. "Now it were best for you to say naught of this matter, especially at Sigtun."

The man shivered, and his comrades nodded. "Trust us, lord. We can guess much that lies unsaid, and we are travelling to the west."

Without a word Alfgar turned and leaped into the saddle. Now, as he rode slowly back towards the town, he wondered what he should do. He burned to charge Svein with the

In sudden anger Alfgar drew his sword and seized the terrified merchant by the shoulder.

came into his face; he stared closer, and quickly handed back the chip.

"Nay, I can read it not, friend."

In sudden fury Alfgar tore the peace-bands from his sword and bared the weapon, seizing the man by the shoulder.

"Read, you dog!" he shouted, his eyes flaming with rage. Trembling in his fear, the man reached out for the chip and spoke stammeringly.

"Lord, there are but two words—'Svein slew.'"

That was all Alfgar needed. Replacing his murder, but knew well that he dared not do this. Evidently Sigurd had not been quite dead, and had just time enough to scratch the few runes with the weapon that had killed him.

"And that little action may have saved Norway from war," concluded the Saxon as Sigtun came into sight. "No, I must say nothing, but lay it all in the hands of Harald as soon as may be. Svein must continue to think that I know nothing of his plotting."

Entering the town, Alfgar rode quietly to his quarters, returned his weary horse, and

took his way to the harbour. Here he talked for a long time with an old fisherman, who looked doubtfully at the bay, but as Alfgar poised a gold ring in his hand, nodded.

"I will be ready, lord, provided the wind is fair."

Then Alfgar went to his quarters again and clad himself in his best. Going to the palace of Olaf the Swedish king, he sent for the priest Sigvald and asked for a quill and parchment. The priest willingly procured them, and Alfgar wrote a short note to King Svein. It ran:—

I am going by a small boat to join Harald. I will deliver your tidings, to meet you as appointed. Send out the war arrow when you will, and get your ships ready, for Harald will soon come.

"But not as you think, friend Svein," thought Alfgar, grimly, as he sealed the letter and handed it to Sigvald. The priest promised that in the morning it should be delivered, and so Alfgar left him.

"Aye," said Alfgar to himself, as he returned home. "If Harald comes it will be to exact a heavy vengeance for the death of his tooth-thrall. So rest in peace, King Svein, and it may be that in time you shall feel the taste of Varangar swords in memory of Sigurd Thick!"

At dawn the next morning Alfgar, his small possessions bundled up, strode down to the shore. The old fisherman and his two sons were waiting, their big boat lying ready, and Alfgar stepped aboard with a word of greeting and a smile.

"It is no light work, Jarl," remarked the old man, taking the tiller as his sons ran up the sail. "We have the Baltic to cross, but the weather promises well and the wage is good."

And thus it happened that Alfgar crossed the Baltic in a fishing boat, and came into Aldeigiaburg late one afternoon. But as the harbour lay clear before them, Alfgar rubbed his eyes. Where were the ships of Harald, and all his host? Save for a few small boats the port was empty!

In a fever of impatience he urged the others on, and, as the craft drew in to a wharf, leaped ashore. A number of men were standing about, and Alfgar addressed one of these.

"Where is Harald of Norway?"

"Harald!" The men stared at him in surprise. "Why, he departed a day ago for Sweden! Whence come you, not to know this?"

Alfgar staggered back as if struck by a blow. Too late! Svein's plots had succeeded after all! But his informant had not finished.

"Stay! Now I think of it, one of his men—his helmsman, I heard say—was cracked on the head as the boats were loading. Harald ordered him to be left behind. You will find him in the red house yonder, where he is being tended, and he can tell you the news."

Bidding the old fisherman wait, Alfgar set off at a run towards the house the men pointed out. As he approached he heard a cry of joy, and Atli Farseer, his head bandaged, staggered out with open arms.

"Flamehair! Where in the name of Odin have you sprung from?"

"I came from Sweden in a small boat," returned Alfgar. "Oh, Farseer! Harald is ruined! Svein——" and in a torrent of words he poured forth the story, standing there before the little house that flared dull red in the sunset light. As he listened, old Atli seemed to throw off his years, until at the conclusion of the tale he gripped at his sword with a deep oath.

"The Danish dog! So he plots to make strife between Magnus and Harald to further his own schemes!" burst forth the old Viking. "Lad, there is good work in old Atli yet. This crack on the head well-nigh finished me, but in a few days we can travel. This boat of yours—is she staunch and fast?"

"Yes!" cried Alfgar, seizing his arm. "Why?"

"Sit down, lad. Take it easy. Here is my plan: that we take this boat, you and I, and sail south to meet Harald and Svein before they can get far, or before they get to Norway."

"But how?" exclaimed Alfgar, in despair. "Svein can collect his men in a few days, and the ships are ready. By this time he may have sailed!"

"No matter," rejoined Atli, quietly. "Have you ever heard of the Halogaland wizards, Flamehair?"

"I have heard the men talking," answered the Saxon, puzzled. "They say these wizards from the north can command the wind from any quarter they wish."

Atli chuckled. "Not that, but almost. I am from that land, lad, from the Isle of Thiotta in the north. Now, among a few of us is known a secret that few wot of. I cannot command the wind, but from whatever quarter it may blow I can make it serve me."

Alfgar stared at Farseer in bewilderment. In those days the Vikings knew nothing of tacking or beating up against the wind; if the wind was fair they ran before it; if not, then they did the best they might. As Atli had said, only the men of the far north of Norway, the Halogalanders, knew and held secret the real art of sailing.

All this old Atli explained to Alfgar that night. The next morning Alfgar saw his fisherman and the latter readily agreed to sell his boat, trusting to get passage home on another

sailing from the port. Then under Atli's direction the sail was changed and the boat itself built over to suit him. In all, Alfgar was at the port only four days, and on the fifth he and Atli Farseer set sail in the little fishing boat.

That was a long, stern journey, and long before the end was reached did Jarl Alfgar repent his rashness in starting. But all things have an ending, and after many days of hard work and weary watches the blue line of the fiords and mountains drew into the horizon ahead.

On the trip Atli had told the young Jarl of how Harald had waited for news, and how finally, taken sick, he had decided to push out for Sigtun himself with his ships. These carried all Harald's wealth, together with the families of his men, and Algar learned that Sigrid was in attendance upon the Princess Elizabeth, Harald's wife. In short, everything was to be staked on one desperate cast, and if Harald should lose, Magnus would be able to make a clean sweep of his foes.

"Do you know where we are?" asked Alfgar, gazing anxiously at the long cliffs ahead. Atli smiled.

"I am no wizard, lad, for all that I can sail a boat against the wind. Nay, we will have to land and seek news, but it seems to me that we are near the south end of Sweden. If Harald has not passed, well and good; if the fleet has gone by, we will catch them up at the straits between Sweden and Denmark."

An hour later they landed at a small fishing village, and there gained the news that a great fleet had passed, far out at sea, the day before. Getting a fresh supply of food and water, the two hastened back to their little craft and hurriedly pushed out again. Atli had guessed their position aright.

"Two days' lead on us, nearly," said Atli. "Fear not, Flamehair; the men will land at the straits to burn and plunder, and we will catch them up easily. It were best to come up with them by night, methinks, and lay the matter before Harald in secret."

To this Alfgar agreed readily. Their boat was a fast one and no winds hindered them, for Atli was a cunning steersman, and under his directions Alfgar, having passed his word to hold it secret, learned the art of sailing forward in all winds. This was in truth a great thing in those days, and although discovered long before by the Halogalanders, it was not for centuries later that ships of the Northland made general use of the knowledge.

For two days they followed the coast, gaining news of the immense fleet of the Danish king. Finally they came to the straits, with the land of Denmark stretching to the south, or rather the Danish islands, and learned that the fleet lay in a large bay a few miles ahead. Svein was gathering his scattered partisans, and the Vikings were spreading fire and death among those who held to King Magnus.

Waiting until nightfall, having secured a fisherman to guide them to the bay, they made all speed through the darkness. Shortly before midnight they caught a flare of torches ahead, and by the dim starlight saw a black mass of ships lying at rest, while a great camp was spread on the shore beyond. As it was impossible to find their way, Atli hailed a ship and found that Harald was aboard a vessel just ahead of them. A moment later they drew alongside this, and Alfgar went over the rail.

The guards greeted him with a surprised cry, but he quickly silenced them and inquired after Harald.

"He is in the cabin, talking with Eadgar and Haldor, Jarl," replied the men. Without hesitation Alfgar sprang forward, and saw a gleam of light from the partly open cabin door. With a thrill of emotion that sent a sob into his throat, Alfgar recognised his uncle, the Icelander, and Harald seated about a rush-light, talking earnestly.

"I like it not," the gruff Haldor was saying. "Svein speaks us fair, Harald, but I would fain hear some news of Flamehair and Sigurd Thick——"

He paused abruptly, and all three sprang to their feet as Alfgar pushed open the door. Encrusted with salt brine, haggard, and weary, there was a glint of triumph in the eyes of the young Jarl as he flung something on the table before Harald.

"There is your news, Harald! Ask of that knife and that chip of wood where Sigurd Thick lies!"

And as he spoke the words Alfgar staggered, overcome by his great weariness, and fell into his uncle's arms.

(*To be concluded*)

Ups and Downs

The Story of an Exciting Football Match Played at the Public School Corps Training Camp at - Epsom -

***

By JAMES DUNCAN

As Arkwright dived at his knees, the Welshman swerved, and a volley of cheers went up when it was seen that his stride had taken him over.

I

IT was when he began to read the football scribes that Williams ought to have developed an opinion of himself. But although his friends admitted the slight "unevenness of temperament" which these writers, with a kindly euphemism, suggested as the only flaw in his game, not even his enemies (had such existed) could have charged him with the slightest taint of side. On the contrary, his nature was too diffident.

Williams was super-sensitive, and always shy.

Yet if he had given himself an air or two, he might have been excused — undoubtedly. When the papers which devote a column to school football informed him, as they had a habit of doing, that Fordbridge had never produced a better three-quarter, he might and probably he did recall the magnificent traditions of Fordbridge football, and perhaps he wandered into the pavilion.

Among the names of past fifteens inscribed there were many that had made Welsh Rugger history; and here and there he could have shown you one who had worn an International cap while still at school. Scanning these, reading the future told for him by men whose claim to judge could scarce be challenged, Williams would have been forgiven by all but his schoolfellows if he had forgotten that there were heroes before Agamemnon.

In knowledge of the game, in speed, and in resource no better boy outside has come from Wales; and we forget neither the Sweet Escotts, nor Teddy Morgan; nor Bryn and Clem Lewis of to-day. In physique, which counts for so much, he has the advantage of all these.

In this manner the leading organ of Welsh football had summed him when reviewing the Fordbridge season of 1913-4. "But he must learn," the authority added, "to overcome his temperamental failing."

His temperamental failing! Williams had smiled, not altogether happily, when he read

this. "To call a spade a spade," said he to himself, "it means I've got too rank a temper for Rugger." But he went too far.

His temper was not "rank" but hasty, and often hard to curb. Its flash had gone as swiftly as it flared. Yet it placed him at indubitable disadvantage with his only rival at the public schools.

It was curious, but altogether fitting, that Mansbury, the school in the West of England, should in 1913-4 have produced this rival.

Curious, because England challenges Wales; fitting, because Mansbury plays Fordbridge. Few events in the Rugger calendar are more interesting than these annual meetings between Fordbridge and Mansbury.

The match of February, 1914, was won by the latter by 2 goals to 3 tries, but the critics when they rose from their ring seats were still disputing Williams *versus* Arkwright. The Englishman had scored both tries for Mansbury, and was, his advocates urged, the safer player. "And never loses his wool," one added pointedly. But Welshmen plumped for Williams.

They continued their debate in their own journals, which should have been bad for its two subjects. And the fact that neither of them was moved thereby to over-estimate his own place in the human scale is one that, at all events, says something for the system in which they were being bred.

But the discussion took a piquancy and larger interest when "Old Blue" announced in the *Football World* that Williams was entered at Cambridge, Arkwright at Oxford. "In the October term, when they go up," he wrote, "we shall see the fine struggle between these two renewed. It is certain that each, if he keeps fit and well, will go straight into his 'Varsity fifteen, so that the followers of Rugger in its best phase should enjoy a great treat next December, when they fight their duel out again at Queen's Club."

When Williams read this paragraph at Fordbridge, he smiled his whimsical smile to his friend Powell, and remarked that there was many a slip, look you, between the cup of a school reputation and the lip of a Blue. His metaphor was rather a clumsy one, and unworthy, as Powell quickly retorted, of a man who had won an open schol. at Trinity. It appears that Williams was scholar as well as athlete.

And when, on his breezy Western Downs, Arkwright read this paragraph as well, he commandeered the paper and tore it up, declaring shyly to his study-mate that "sometimes some fellows write awful piffle." But afterwards he was just a little sorry that he had not cut the few lines out and sent them home. They might have pleased the pater, at any rate.

Still, time enough when he'd actually got to Oxford, to begin to think about Blues and that sort of thing.

Time enough for both of them, it seemed then; but in fact a longer time than either foresaw. Williams did not take up his schol. at Trinity in October. Arkwright did not proceed to Keble.

For this happened.

In his summer holidays Williams was at Conway, when he saw a man surrounded by a crowd. The man had mounted to the roof of a cab, and was displaying a Uhlan helmet to the people, inquiring if the young men of the country wished to see the wearers of such things on their shores? He told them also of certain doings in Belgium.

Williams listened, and went home thoughtfully The prospect of Trinity had been very pleasant. But before his eyes another vision burned now —of a man upon a cab-top, with a German helmet.

For three days Williams had little to say Then he spoke to his father, and a letter wa written to Cambridge University. Trinity had lost a promising scholar; but Lord Kitchener had gained one more recruit.

Williams was off with the University and Public School Corps to Epsom — the "UPS," as Epsom came to call them.

II

On September the eighteenth, when Williams reported himself in Hyde Park, to parade with the three battalions already enrolled, before entraining for Epsom, he inquired awkwardly for some of his old schoolfellows. And when he was informed that the men from Wales and the West would follow later, that the majority had probably not yet been attested, he said no more. He fell in shyly into a rear rank, but he wished there was somebody he knew.

He wished later—when he was in the train—that he had brought with him a packet of sandwiches. For it was hours before they were entrained, and no chance to eat had been given at Victoria. His fellow recruits, he felt, must think him surly, as he leaned back in his corner without a word, and shook his head to their proffers of sandwich-tins. But he had always

been uncomfortable with strangers, and he couldn't throw off his cloak of reserve,

Figuratively, he took a glance at himself. Here he was, embarked with a lot of strangers upon an adventure which he'd rather have gone without. But it was just the thing a fellow *had* to go through, when he thought of those beastly helmets. For the rest, he had thicker shoulders than most: and a beast of a temper: and no notion of soldiering. He wished he'd been in the O.T.C. at Fordbridge!

So he followed his thoughts until they arrived at Epsom, where he found that he was billeted on a butcher. He found, too, that until the battalion had shaken down he was in E Company; and as soon as possible he made a meal. Then he strolled out to have a look round, and throw off his depression if he could.

For he told himself that it was absolute rot to sham that he *wasn't* feeling miserable and lonely.

"It's Williams, isn't it?"

The Welshman turned round with a start. A slim figure had overtaken him in the High Street, and the voice seemed faintly familiar. It associated itself in his mind with Fordbridge, and yet not with Fordbridge.

"A bit of a rag, eh, meeting again like this!"

Williams was visibly embarrassed. "I seem," he said awkwardly, "to remember you."

"Of course. My name's Arkwright. Dash it all, you remember our game last February?"

"By Jove!" cried Williams, and grabbed the other's hand, as the common bond thawed shyness for a moment. "Are you in this wheeze too? By Jove!" and he glanced at Arkwright's khaki shirt and collar, which was the nearest the Ups had reached to their uniform yet.

"Rath-er! What's your company? Where are you billeted?"

Williams told him, and inquired in turn.

"Mine's F," said Arkwright, with his jolly laugh.. "And at present sixty of us are shoved in the Town Hall. The huts won't be ready, they say, till the end of October."

He would make a poor soldier, thought the Welshman, compared with Arkwright. He eyed the latter's smart, trim figure, and involuntarily jerked his own big shoulders back. In football there had been nothing to choose between them, but already his rival left him behind at this game.

"Buck up! What's the matter?" The cheery tone snapped short his train of thoughts.

"You've done this sort of thing before?" he said.

"I was in the O.T.C. at Mansbury," smiled Arkwright. "But come on. Let's have a prowl round."

The old Mansbury boy discovered that Williams could talk, and talk well, when it came to fighting old football battles again; and their friendship grew. Recruits arrived, old Mansbury and Fordbridge men, but it did not slacken, as it might have done. Arkwright hunted with Williams, Williams with Arkwright; and night after night would see them puffing their pipes together, hard-beat perhaps after their three parades, but wearily content to sit and yarn. Or often Williams would be listening solemnly, while Arkwright posted him up in his drill. But Williams was quick to learn.

He was astonished when one day his C.O. summoned him; and still more, when very soon afterwards he paraded as Second-Lieutenant Williams of G Company. But he wondered what his old company was thinking, and would have been surprised to know that they applauded the choice. A fortnight of the intercourse of the ranks had given them, as it happened, a higher opinion of Private Williams than he held himself.

However, there was a fly in the ointment, Arkwright was a private still in F Company, and, when his friend congratulated him, Williams fancied his manner was restrained, almost uneasy. It was natural, he reflected, quite natural, that Arkwright should feel a trifle jealous. "For, look you, he knows much more soldiering than I do," he explained to himself that night. "He's sore that I am promoted!" Perhaps Arkwright might have been: more likely Williams imagined it.

When he opened his eyes next morning, he glanced at his wrist watch and saw with disgust that it was twenty to seven. He had overslept himself: réveillé must have sounded twenty-five minutes ago: he had only twenty minutes before parade. A cheerless rain was pattering on the window pane, and it set him growling, for the first time since he had joined, at the barbarity of seven o'clock parade.

As he tubbed the sleep away, he felt annoyed with himself for grousing. This was better, at any rate, than the half-past six parade of a week ago! And then his self-annoyance became irritation—for wherever was his precious bow of red tape, which, until the uniforms were ready, served as his officer's badge. He couldn't turn up before his men without it.

He remembered leaving it upon the dressing-table—but the beastly thing had made away with itself. He dropped down on his hands and knees, and groped.

When Williams found his badge at last—behind the dressing-table in a dusty crevice—and dashed out of his billet into the street, his temper was hotter than the cup of coffee which he had been compelled to leave untouched. Unfortunate this, for, approaching the Town Hall, he ran into a youth who had just emerged. With a cheery grin this youth turned to go on his way, and failed to raise his hand in salute.

It was Arkwright, and in a flash Williams recalled the thoughts of Arkwright with which he had gone to sleep. At war with all the world as he felt just then, he interpreted forgetfulness as an affront. If Arkwright *was* jealous of his seniority, he need not show it so deliberately. Instead of saluting—he had grinned!

At any other time Williams would have grinned back. But his quick temper flamed suddenly. Gripping Arkwright's shoulders, and oblivious to the other men rushing by, he upbraided him angrily and passionately. He shook him, and strode off.

Arkwright looked puzzled; then went very white. He was white as a sheet still when he joined his company.

But now the Welshman's gust of temper had spent itself, to be followed by a horrible disquiet. Drill seemed as if it would go on for ever; for all the time, while he did his work mechanically, his thoughts were traversing that hot scene in the High Street. What was it he had screamed at Arkwright? He wished he could remember. What *had* he said?

After dismissing the company, he strode off wretchedly; his only object now to make amends. He must find his friend and tell him what a beastly mistake it was—how he'd got up like a bear with a sore head—how he hadn't *meant* anything. He must take his words back; he must put things right.

Hot-foot he sped towards the Town Hall, where, as luck would have it, he found the man he sought, alone before the orders for the day.

Arkwright swung round at the other's step, and their eyes met, but his never flickered. Drawing himself up, with a frigid salute, he stood at attention as Williams began to speak. But when the latter had finished he answered icily:—

"Is that all, sir?"

"Yes," said Williams in a voice that shook, and seemed about to renew his apologies But as Arkwright saluted again without a word, he strode away and back to his lonely billet. It was plain enough that Arkwright had done with him.

Recollection of the Englishman's many kindnesses returned poignantly. When he was raw and felt like a fish out of water, Arkwright had taken him up and seen him through. Shy of new acquaintances and nervous, there wasn't a man there he really cared for but Arkwright. So much he remembered while he was breakfasting, with many a bitter reproach for his vile temper.

He was to blame; he was alone to blame. His commission was only a few hours old—what easier than for Arkwright to forget it, in the rush to get upon parade!

Still, he had said he was sorry. Arkwright might still come round.

But Arkwright showed no signs of coming round. And day by day now, when the two encountered, Williams winced and shrank from his cold salute. It stabbed him; till he began to slip round corners or into shops when he saw him coming.

And more and more he missed what he had lost. There were moments when he would have sacrificed his commission to be on the old footing with his friend.

And then he heard that Arkwright had got his stripe, and been transferred to B Company of the Second Battalion. He sent a shy note of congratulation. But he received no answer, and the other's attitude when they met next was as distant as ever.

Making no other friends, Williams soon found that his men regarded him as a good but unsociable officer. But he discovered that they were recalling something else as soon as the talk was of a Rugger match, to be played between his company and B of the Second Battalion. For G, he heard, were looking to him to pull them through to victory.

Camp welcomes any new excitement, so it is not surprising that this game of football grew all at once to be the pervading topic. It began with the discovery that B was composed exclusively of Englishmen, whereas G, as chance would have it, contained more than a liberal sprinkling of men from Wales. Forthwith this inter-company fray was invested with the importance of an international; the Ups uniting to proclaim it their own particular England *v.* Wales. And it was whispered that the C.O.'s and their colleagues were just as keen as any on the result.

When Williams heard this his zest in life revived. But very soon it ebbed with the

recollection that Corporal Arkwright was in B Company. He loathed the prospect of renewing the old sporting duel with a man who now had reason to detest him, with an opponent who felt at daggers drawn off the field.

But how could he leave his own men in the lurch? The enemy were already "boosting" on Arkwright.

And B Company was going all out to win.

Just then a curious rumour came to his ears. It ran to the effect that the Commanding Officer of the Second Battalion, in his keenness for the success of his champions and England, had virtually promised Arkwright his commission if his company pulled off the match. Williams pooh-poohed this rumour, and ridiculed it; but constant dropping wears away the stone, and it was reiterated so circumstantially, that he began to think there might be something in it. "Look you," he told his gossips angrily, "Arkwright's smart enough for a commission in any case."

III

In camp most of the discussion turned upon the respective form of Williams and Arkwright. It was agreed that the fortunes of their sides would depend upon them. The old controversy was revived: old records were unearthed: and men from Mansbury recalled Williams' "temperament," and men from Fordbridge spoke of his great strength. His strength made him the more dangerous of the two, they asserted; for skill, being equal, strength must tell its tale. But, retorted B Company, Arkwright can tackle anything. An elephant or a steam-roller—he'd bring them down.

Epsom caught the infection from the camp; and had the fever badly on the day. It had lent its ground, and now it flocked there to a man and maid. The town, indeed, seemed to be turning out *en masse*, struggling for the best places with the Ups of the three battalions. It is said that never in its history has the football ground seen such a "gate."

When Williams led out G Company, playing in all white, the crowd acclaimed them as Wales, and some waved leeks. B Company, in dark knickers and black-and-white, were hailed with "Buck up, England!" and similar cries, and skippered, by virtue probably of seniority, by Captain Rigby.

It was a long three years since the genial Captain of B Company had put his toe to an honest Rugger ball. He had gathered some flesh since then and lost some wind, but he booted off with a vim and energy that was ominous for the forwards against him, if he could last. And he followed up with a rush that smothered the ball and the G half, who had mulled it, into touch.

How Williams wished, during these first hot minutes, that he was behind the Fordbridge scrum again! For the men in front of him packed like a ragged mob, and rarely got the ball, and broke up slowly. Cohesion, of course, was not to be expected, for the eight had never played together before, but their slowness and lack of tactics were galling to the keen and fiery Welshman accustomed to the drilled game of his countrymen. He could have screamed at them, as chance after chance went begging; but all his breath was needed to stop B rushes.

For, well as it was for G Company that their opponents combined no better, yet the English forwards had in Captain Rigby a dashing single-handed raider, who constantly bore down with the ball at his toes and twice was only held up on the line. His half-backs had not kept the pace with him, but Arkwright, quick to grasp the situation, now moved up to stand-off half himself, and ten minutes of sustained attack ensued, in which he and Rigby did everything but score.

Two men, as it seemed to the crowd, bore the brunt and fury of this English onslaught. One was the stocky little full-back, who had learned his football at Llandovery, and kicked with uncanny zest and precision from any angle and attitude into touch. And the other was Williams.

Everything was now thrice justified which the football scribes had written of the big Welshman's defence. He had forgotten Arkwright; he remembered nothing except the rush of battle in his ears and the need to fling himself wherever the ball tossed. From man to man he sprang, tackle on tackle, till eventually he would smother man and ball, and his ragged forwards would form into a scrum.

And twice he had rushed across the ground, and brought down Arkwright, who had returned to the wing. Then Arkwright feinted, and endeavoured to cut through, but the Welshman had his heels up just outside. And Captain Rigby learned to his discomfort that football is a more jealous master than cricket. Some cricketers can desert their game for three years, and return and find their form immediately. But no deserter can so return to football.

The Welshmen began to find a game. The ordeal they had come through seemed to have

acted as a tonic, as ordeals often do on Celts. A month of playing together might not have done for them so much as their grand gruelling had done.

The Welsh supporters now cheered jubilantly, and their cries rose in a *crescendo* of excitement when Williams was seen with his first real chance. He had made it for himself by intercepting a pass, and, swerving outwards, was sprinting down the wing. Perhaps forty yards to go, and the full-back dashing across, and one of the English three-quarters leaping to tackle.

But the latter embraced the air as Williams sidestepped; then rushed on, regathering full speed. The moment's check in his pace, however, had served to give another adversary his chance. From the press a slim figure flew forward, and hunted Williams stride by stride along.

Old Mansbury men were shrieking, for they knew that Arkwright was a yard the faster. If he timed his tackle, he would have his man before they reached the hesitant full-back, unless the Welshman's enormous strength brushed him aside! "Oh! Tackled, sir!" their voices rang next instant.

Williams fell heavily, and when he rose it was seen from the rails that he was limping. He shot one glance at Arkwright before moving back to his place behind the line-out. It had occurred to him that Arkwright had brought him down with a vigour considerably unnecessary. At the speed that he was travelling, and bored upon the line, a push would have shoved him into touch, he told himself.

In Wales the push into touch is more conventional. At Mansbury you bring your man down in the good old style.

But he had forgotten his limp when he plunged into the fray again, which excited one of the ultra-English townees to exclaim that Taffies were notorious "kidders." The gibe, as unjust as it was silly, was uttered unfortunately by the rails in tones so loud that Williams overheard it. It stung him, and he half turned, with clenched fist.

Fortune flowed and ebbed now, from goal to goal; but on each side the machinery would break down just when a score seemed certain. For, as one swallow does not make a summer, so one player will never make a fifteen; though if either Arkwright or Williams had been supported, or if each had not been compelled to mark the other, both must have made their way over the line ere now. The gallant Rigby had utterly shot his bolt; his spirit more willing than ever, his flesh too weak; and the game, as the prophets had been predicting, was resolving itself into a duel between these two. And each risked everything to score.

But nothing had resulted at half-time.

The surgeon tapped his knee. "That hurt you?" he asked. "No," said Williams to the doctor's surprise.

While he sucked his lemon, Williams encouraged his forces; till some demon of mischief suddenly reminded him of the vile gibe that had been flung against himself. He swung round with an unconscious scowl towards the spot behind the rails whence it had come. He saw a black-bearded townsman, in a bowler hat, who happened to catch his eye, and seemed to sneer.

The second half opened with a thrill, for Arkwright seemed to have a clear run in. But, before the crowd quite realised how it happened, Williams got to him, and brought him down; and, a minute later, as Arkwright dropped at goal, he collared him again, and the ball flew wide. Then the G forwards somehow got possession, and carried it up the ground from hand to hand. "If they can manage a bit more work like that," the crowd said, "they'll put the leek on top for sure."

But it was left for their captain to put the leek on top. For when his stand-off half never managed to feed him, he sent the little man from Llandovery up; and the latter, to his own astonishment, slipped the black-and-white halves, and drew the defence. Then he flung out wide and true to Williams.

As he took the ball, Williams eluded Rigby, who had been lying well forward on purpose to mark him, and now came panting loudly in his wake, with gasps to his threequarters to get across. But only Arkwright could do so in time, and the Welshman knew that now he had room to dodge him. He feinted to pass, but Arkwright was not deceived; then he swerved, as Arkwright dived at his knees. A forest of leeks was lifted and cheers volleyed when it was seen that his stride had taken him clean over. Over Arkwright, at full length on the ground and over the line—but Williams did not pause there. With the indomitable Rigby puffing in his rear, he cantered on and scored behind the posts.

He took the kick himself.

And missed it!

First blood, however, to G Company; and as things had gone—quite likely the only blood. Arkwright tried another drop at goal, which hit the cross-bar and bounced back into play; and a big forward crossed but lost the ball; in short, everything went awry for the Englishmen. The tide of luck was setting dead against them.

Fifteen ding-dong, scrambling minutes followed; when presently a wild but hefty kick sent the ball soaring above the head of G's full-back, who incautiously had been lying too close up. Instantly Arkwright was threading through the ruck, flashing in pursuit almost before the nonplussed back could turn. The ball bounced well for him, and he secured it with a straight run in, while Williams galloped vainly at his heels.

The kick, an easy one, was taken too casually; and to the wild delight of the leek-wavers and G's, the ball screwed feebly yards to the left of goal. Three points all, and anybody's game yet; poor football, but a mighty match!

And quickly after the drop-out, the ball was seen in Arkwright's hands again. But instead of going straight ahead to encounter Williams, he bored diagonally across the ground, which brought him to the left wing from the right. This manœuvre behind the screen of his own men seemed successful when he had eluded the Welsh wing, and might have carried him right through if Williams had not been marking him. So the latter had followed as Arkwright screwed across, and now was up, to hurl himself at his quarry.

The townee's gibe had stung Williams, and his temper was red hot. Now, he was thinking, was his chance of "downing" Arkwright as heavily as Arkwright had thrown him.

With a crash the two collided, and came to earth. From the rails beside them a girl screamed.

Her scream brought Williams to his feet, and he saw that he had made the tackle on the touch-line, within rail-length of the man with the black beard. He heard the latter vigorously cry "Shame!" and saw that Arkwright lay still where he had fallen. "Man hurt!" he called to the referee.

Then he dropped upon his knees beside his old-time friend, and for an awful moment thought that he had killed him. Frantically he begged of him to speak. But Arkwright neither stirred nor heard; his eyes were closed, and he lay like a log.

A couple of strangers elbowed the crush aside, and Williams staggered back, burning with shame.

Ashamed and horrified because he knew very well that he had *meant* to tackle Arkwright heavily. The fire of his temper, quenched outright, had left him cold and shivering with remorse.

Perhaps he had injured Arkwright permanently! Perhaps Arkwright could never serve in the Corps again! And he, the man to whom Arkwright had been so decent, had let his beastly temper repay him in this way!

"No, no limbs broken."

The words the doctor had just spoken were the most grateful Williams had ever heard.

"Can he go on?" he asked in a queer voice.

"Oh, no; he must lie still awhile."

Williams staggered suddenly, and almost fell. A stranger in a silk hat rushed to him.

"Eh? You hurt as well?" the latter jerked.

"It's my right knee, I think," said Williams, limping.

"Straighten your leg out—so—let's have a look," the other answered in brisk, professional manner; and gripping the femur with his left hand, with the other he proceeded to tap the kneecap. "H'm—ha," he murmured. "That hurt you? Do you feel that?"

"No," said Williams. "No. That doesn't hurt."

The brisk young surgeon looked a little astonished; then grasped the limb again, and bent and straightened it. At last he raised his head, and regarded his patient.

"Sure that doesn't hurt you?" he repeated.

"No," said Williams; but with less decision.

"Then you're as sound as a bell," the surgeon answered brusquely. "It's only fancy."

Williams moved back a pace, but limped still.

Amazement kindled in the surgeon's eyes; amazement, and something like contempt. With a curt ejaculation he turned away.

They were carrying Arkwright off now, and, to the crowd's vexation, Williams went limping after. "My knee!" he jerked to the man from Llandovery. "You skipper 'em."

But presently a rumour ran and grew that the Welshman had had enough of it—and was malingering. "That's rot!" said the onlookers of G Company. But they looked uneasy.

When Arkwright came round in the dressing-room a minute or two afterwards, it was to find himself alone with Williams who sat beside him moodily hugging his knee. Their eyes met.

"Hallo! You hurt as well?" Arkwright's seemed asking.

"My knee!" Williams mumbled, looking away.

Arkwright lay still, when suddenly a prolonged roar from the ground sent his companion full-tilt to the door. "A close squeak!" he exclaimed as he returned. "They all but scored."

"Who, sir?"

"Oh, drop the sir!" cried Williams, huskily. "Your lot."

Bewilderment crept over the other's face. For Williams had dashed across the room and back with an alacrity remarkable in a cripple!

"Arkwright, I'm beastly sorry," he muttered, "for laying you out. I—I went too hard for you."

"But, sir—are you really hurt?"

Williams sat dumb.

"Are you really hurt?" pressed Arkwright, his eyes upon the other's hanging head.

And now something in that steady gaze broke down the barriers of long pent feelings. When Williams spoke his words came in a spate.

"Arkwright, my knee's . . . all right. But it's only fair for me to go off, too."

"I don't follow, sir," said Arkwright, cold again.

"Oh, can't you see, man—can't you see," cried Williams, feverishly. "It's only a Company game! Who cares who wins?"

"You seemed," said Arkwright, drily, "to care very much."

"At first I did. Before I lost my wool, and laid you out. But I couldn't be such a beast as to go on playing. For with you away I might have won the match."

"Go on," said Arkwright, as Williams stopped dead, awkwardly.

"If B loses, good-bye to your commission."

Then Arkwright sprang up and faced him.

"Williams, you silly ass!" he cried, but his tone was the old tone that Williams had missed. "You ass! So you swallowed that cock-and-bull story, you juggins! I see now what you were driving at. You shammed hurt, and did not care what men thought to give my Company more chance of winning—to get me my commission. Oh, you goat!"

"Well, I'd purposely laid you out," said Williams, glumly.

"What the C.O. did tell me—if you care to know—was that he's already recommended me. That's how the rumour sprang. By Jove!"

There was the rush of feet outside and the door flew open, as the players came jostling in.

"Nothing more scored, Arkwright," cried Captain Rigby. "A try all. A top-hole game! You better?"

"As fit as a fiddler, sir," came the gay reply.

Rigby stared at him. "Young man," laughed he, "you might just have been given your Company by the tones of you!"

"Yes, sir," said Arkwright demurely; "I feel like that."

"Hey! Well, where's that fellow Williams got to? Eh?"

But the Welshman had quietly slipped out.

How to Make a Working Model Submarine

Written and Illustrated by HENRY GREENLY

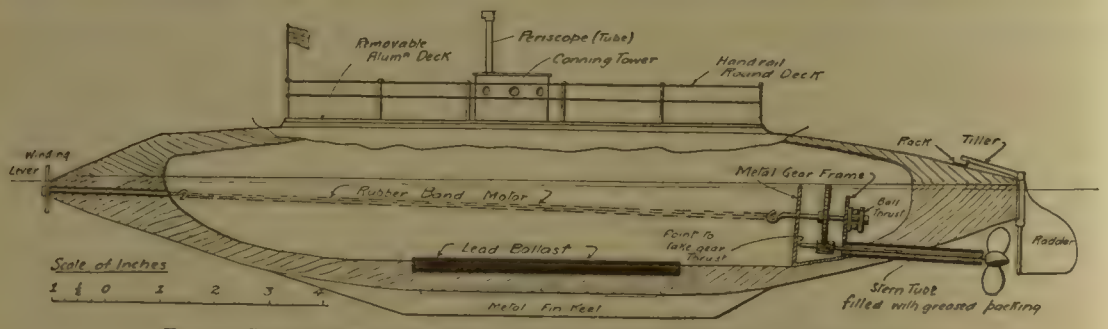


FIG. 1.—Longitudinal section of the model submarine described in this article.

AT the present time submarines are very much before the public eye, and the following description of a simple working model may usefully take its place in the series of "war models" articles published in recent issues of THE CAPTAIN.

As in the real thing, "steam" is impossible as a means of propulsion. As a rule submarines when sailing on the surface are driven by petrol engines, and during this time the engines also drive dynamos and store electricity, which is used for propulsive purposes when the boat is under the surface. For models, an electric drive may be employed, an accumulator supplying the current. The best accumulator would be one of the "unspillable" type to guard against the leakage of acid, which might in certain circumstances be found to be a trouble. The switch would also have to be attached to a spindle carried through a packed water-tight gland in the hull of the boat. Another requirement would be that the model would have to be a fairly large one —say, 2′ 6″ or 3′ long—to carry the comparatively heavy accumulator and electro-motor. An advantage of an electric drive would be that an additional system of gearing worked from the main drive might be applied to work the "elevating" and "depressing" planes, and to cause the boat alternately to sink below and travel on the surface. However, such schemes are more suited to the ambitious and experienced model maker.

The drawing herewith depicts a model which is within the scope of every enthusiast. It is made mainly of wood, and the hull is 18″ long. The inside is, of course, hollowed out. To accomplish this and also to fit the "machinery" it is made in two parts. The upper portion is screwed on to the lower part of the hull, the joint being made with oiled paper or thin rubber to prevent leakage and at the same time to allow the two halves to be parted at any subsequent period. The boat is not truly circular in cross section, but the top has a narrow, flat top which may be covered by a removable (screwed on) deck made of a piece of aluminium plate about 1/20″ thick. A rubber strip should make this joint water-tight. This deck will be more frequently required to be taken off to get at the gearing inside. The details of the deck fittings are simple. An

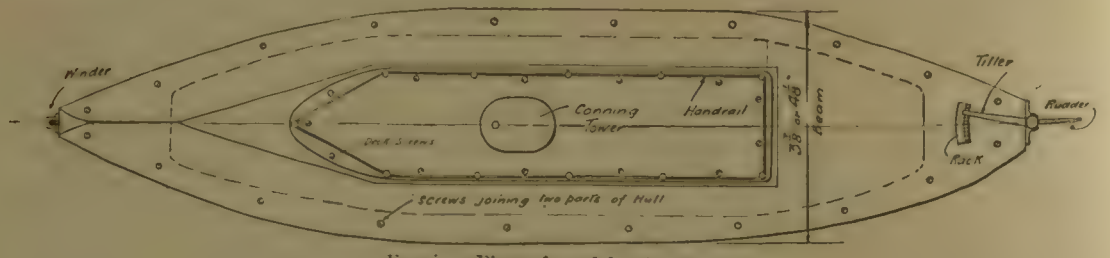


FIG. 2.—Plan of model submarine.

oval conning-tower made of wood or thin brass with aluminium top is required on the deck, and another piece of tube with a right-angle top as a periscope. Metal is preferable to wood

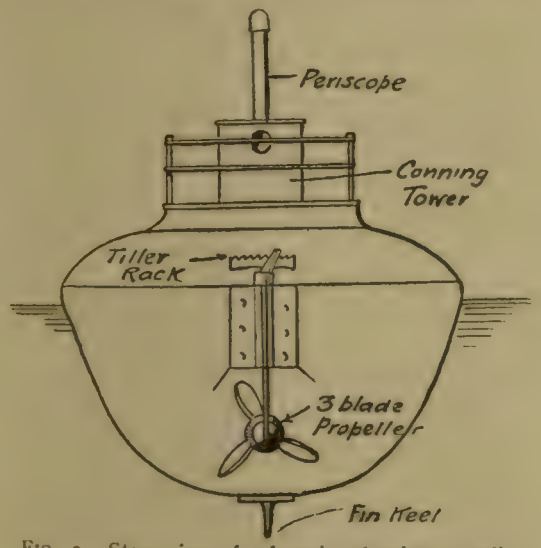


FIG. 3.—Stern view of submarine showing propeller and rudder.

for these parts as, if they are not made of tin-plate or iron, they are more serviceable in the water. The hand-rails may be made of thick brass "blanket-pins" riveted into the deck-plate for stanchions, and brass wire soldered on to the latter for the rails. In some submarines a single hand-rail down the centre of the deck only is used.

The rudder is made of thin brass sheet soldered on to a wire which springs into the split tubular pintle (see Figs. 3 and 5), a tiller is fixed to the top and springs into a short rack. The sweep of the rudder may be very small.

To give the boat vertical stability—more especially when entirely submerged—a fin keel, made of thin sheet brass, may be attached to the underside of the hull, a lug or flange being soldered on to this fin to enable it to be attached to the woodwork of the boat by small (No. 0) brass wood-screws.

As to the motive power for a small model, twisted rubber bands undoubtedly makes the simplest possible "engine." Readers who have made model aeroplanes know that twisted rubber gives out the most power for its weight. Of course, a clockwork motor may be used, as in a model submarine extreme lightness of the mechanism is not so important. The type of clockwork motor to obtain is that with a horizontal driving spindle and a vertical winding key. The latter must protrude through the deck of the boat and be made water-tight by a gland.

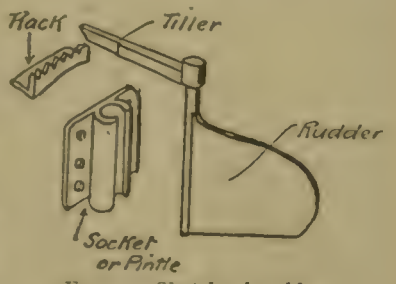


FIG. 5.—Sketch of rudder.

To maintain the stability of the boat and also to load it to the proper water-line a sheet of lead should be fastened to the bottom of the scooped-out lower portion of the hull, as indicated in the main drawing Fig. 1. The weight of this ballast is a matter of experiment, and will depend on the wood used, on the degree to which the scooping out the hull is carried, and on the type of motor used. The rubber-band motor is of the geared type, and model aeroplane dealers will supply all the gears, pinions, ball thrust, and rubber required. The gearing-up—ratio about 3 or 4 to 1—will give a longer run and equalise the power available to that absorbed by the screw propeller.

The propeller-shaft must run in a brass tube. This stern tube has two bushes, one in each end, the space between the bushes being loosely filled with greased darning-cotton to keep the water out. To take the thrust of the propeller the inner end of the shaft is pointed and engages the U-shaped metal frame which holds the motor spindles. The winding end may be simply a piece of metal riveted and soldered on to the end of the forward shaft. A slot may be cut in the end of the hull to receive and retain the T-piece of the winder

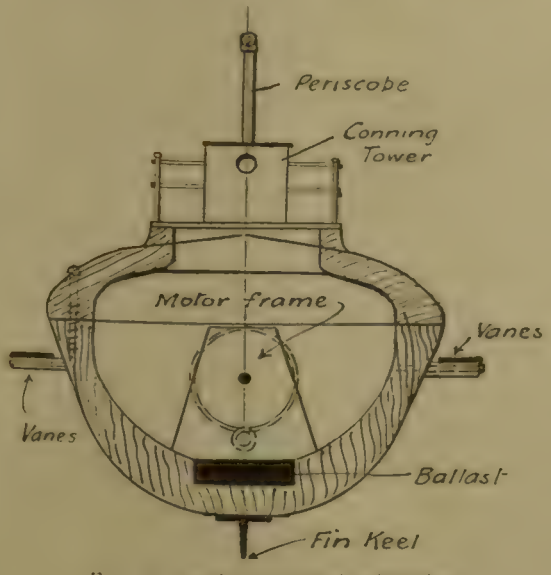


FIG. 4.—Section of model submarine.

when it is fully wound up. The boat should be painted a dark grey or slate colour, and varnished with best copal varnish as a finish.

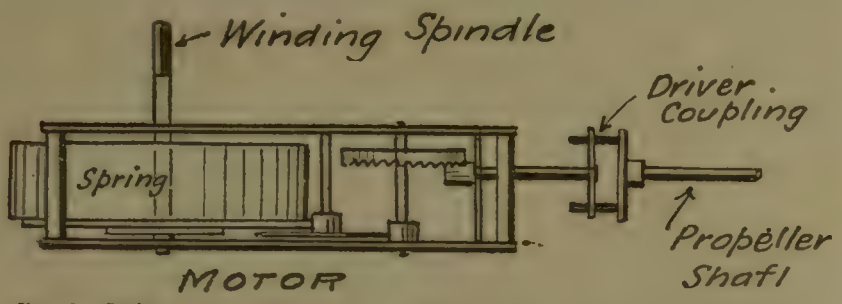


FIG. 6.—Spring motor, with horizontal driving spindle and vertical winding gear.

The most difficult problem is to make the model alternately sink and swim, or even to dive at the outset and then to rise. One method

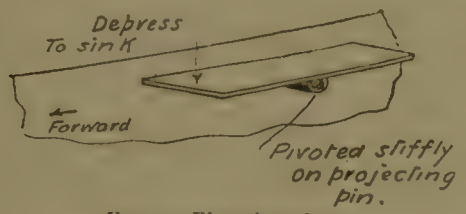


FIG. 7.—Elevating planes.

is to fix vanes or "planes" on the side of the vessel just below the water-line and in front of the longitudinal centre of gravity of the boat. These vanes should be pivoted stiffly, and by placing them at a downward angle the forward power of the boat will cause it to sink. As the power diminishes the boat will cease to dive, and its natural buoyancy will bring it to the surface. With a more powerful clockwork driving mechanism a crank or an eccentric may be fitted to one of the slowly moving spindles, and operate these vanes from the inside. This would give an alternate diving movement to the model submarine. Care must be taken, however, to make all spindles which pass inside the boat water-tight by packed glands, and to make such spindles of non-rusting metals. It also must be borne in mind that all models propelled by mechanical means will have a very limited range of action. A compressed air submarine could be made, but to obtain any success the work must be skilfully and accurately done—in a manner far beyond the scope of the average amateur.

Should, however, any reader wish to tackle the compressed air model submarine, he could not adopt a better type of engine than that used in real torpedoes, namely, the "Brotherhood" three-cylinder balanced engine. In this engine three cylinders are used, which all work on to one crank pin, the cylinders being placed on the same plane and at 120 degrees apart.

The writer has seen French-made model engines of this kind used for moder aeroplanes, and believes they can be obtained, ready for use, from dealers in model aeroplane fittings. The air container would have to be made of metal, preferably of solid-drawn brass tube, and a cycle-tyre valve would require to be fitted to this reservoir to introduce the air, a compound motor-cycle pump being used to obtain the high pressure desirable. The only difficulty that should be experienced is regulating the pressure to the engine; a needle valve, however, with its spindle passing through the top of the hull, should suffice to overcome this.

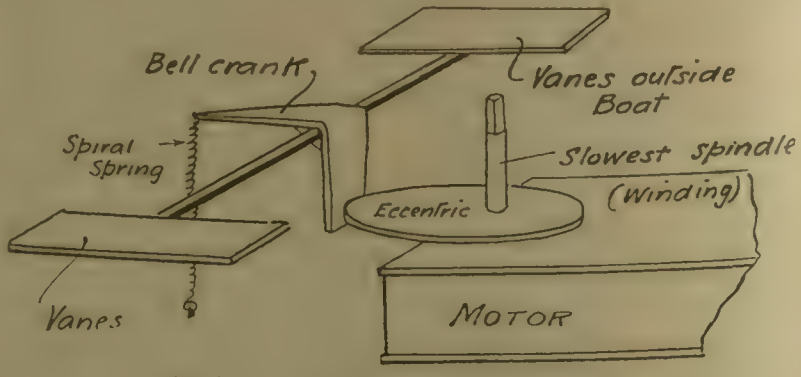


FIG. 8.—An automatic gear for elevating planes.

SOUTHAMPTON STREET,
STRAND, LONDON

The wonders of this war are so numerous and extraordinary, that in marvelling at those which necessarily force themselves upon our notice we are apt to forget that the genius of man has invented many smaller devices which, for sheer utility, are every bit as important as those which loom larger in the public eye. An aeroplane is a wonderful thing; a submarine, the cyclops of the sea, is to many a still greater marvel; wireless telegraphy seems "so simple" nowadays that we hardly pause any longer to breathe a tribute to the great Italian who unravelled the wondrous secret. Napoleon knew of none of these things when he waged war; he groped his way across Europe with no daring air fleet to tell him where the enemy's guns were placed, where reinforcements had come up, nor how the tide of battle ebbed and flowed. Nor had he field-telephones which brave men now drag to places under the very nose of the enemy, places whence they 'phone to their own lines the information which is of such paramount importance—a word by wire to the gunner, and shell after shell screams through the air till the enemy's proudest refuge is shattered and wrecked. No searchlights swept the area of battle at night to warn those that fought in Napoleon's time of surprise attacks or manœuvres under cover of darkness. Even the railway a hundred years ago was unknown, and yet to-day so swift has been the advance of science that the rail seems almost a primitive means of transport, for petrol has revolutionised the locomotion of the world. Motor-cars carry the officers commanding to whichever part of the battle-line their presence is most needed; motor-buses, besides conveying small detachments of troops from one point to another, swiftly bear the wounded from the battle-field to hospital, and on motor-bikes the dispatch-riders of to-day bear their messages of vast importance.

No work is more thrilling than the dispatch-rider's. He is the nerve-centre of the army; with speed and surety he carries the command from the brain of the fighting force to the limb that must immediately obey. Restless, circumspect, and audacious, prepared for any emergency, fearless in face of all peril, yet cautious to incur no danger he can possibly avoid, all things at all times the dispatch-rider must be. The responsibility of saving a battalion from absolute annihilation may rest on his shoulders; nay, even the fate of a decisive battle may lie in the sureness of his hand and the clearness of his mind. The roads may be halfwheel-deep in mud, but he must flog his way through; the enemy's snipers may be hidden along the very way he must travel, their rifles may spit death at him a hundred times, but he must win through with the order he has been given; his officer has spoken, he has only to obey. "It's nothing so bad, when there's cover to hand, and leave and liking to shout," says Kipling, but the dispatch-rider must do his work in silence and alone, and often enough what cover there is only conceals a foe. Those who so cheerily drive their motor-bikes through the rain and the slush, and ever and again clean through an enemy's patrol, are among our very bravest

soldiers at the front. Danger to them is the salt of life; a successful ride through lurking peril the crown of each day's desire.

Nobody can possibly describe with adequate effect the adventurous life of a dispatch-rider but one who has himself been in the very midst of this war's alarms. I was talking to Captain Gilson the other day, and he, home from the front, had memorable words of praise for the motor-cyclists. I suggested to him what a delightful hero a young dispatch-rider—many fellows who have very recently left school have taken like ducks to water to this thrilling game—would make for a CAPTAIN serial, and Captain Gilson's eyes gleamed instant approval. But would he have time to write it amidst his military duties—that was the question. "Try," I begged him, and Captain Gilson left me with the assurance that he would do his best, for the subject had already fascinated him. And but a few hours before commencing to write these lines I had a message from Captain Gilson that right through Christmas he had been hard at it, and with good luck the story would be done. So there the matter remains, though already I feel inclined to boast that I am the first editor to secure a serial story from an officer who has actually been serving in the trenches. If all goes well, Captain Gilson's story will commence in the April number.

"Twisters."—The longer I sit in the editorial chair the harder I find it is to "twist" CAPTAIN competitors; at puzzle-solving I think they would beat any other team selected from the world's amateurs. When the Competition Fag brought me in his idea of "Twisters," announced in the November number, I fancied some of the puzzles would floor almost every entrant, and that seventeen or eighteen correct answers would be sufficient to carry off the prize. When the contest closed, however, and the time came for judging the entries, the Competition Fag's face grew longer and longer as he scrutinised each test, for the little heap of "all right" papers grew and grew until soon there was quite a sturdy pile of them. The C. F.'s task was not lightened by the fact that an error in spelling had crept into number two, the fourth and fifth vowels being inserted instead of the second. "Termonde" this was originally intended to be, and many competitors presuming this, did their best, and put down "Tourmonde." Others, not content with such a primitive evasion, had glorious shots at inventing place-names which have no existence in any gazetteer in the world. In common fairness the Competition Fag had to leave out No. 2 altogether from his calculations, and rely for judgment on the remaining nineteen. Having scrutinised the entire number of entries, one of the biggest we have ever had, he placed the two stacks (Class I. and Class II.) upon my desk, and asked me if I would make the final adjudication and award the prizes, as he was going that afternoon to have one more try at enlisting, though he has already thrice been turned down as unfit for active service owing to a knee hopelessly wrecked at footer. By the time he returned, several hours later, gloomily and for the fourth time refused,

I had finished my task, though, candidly, I have seldom had so difficult and perplexing an afternoon's work. It was obviously impossible to divide the prize among so many, and I was compelled to fall back upon the expedient of taking the smallest details into consideration. According to the rules I am allowed to take neatness and age into consideration, though I never let my final judgment rest on these points except in cases of a very last resource; but on this occasion I was compelled to utilise this condition. Consequently, the first prize in the First Class goes to—

F. St. J. NORTH,
6, Tamworth Villas,
Mitcham Common, Surrey,

and in the Second Class to—

F. J. STEVENS,
"The Crays,"
Chessington Road, Ewell,

both of whom I heartily congratulate on their success, knowing that they will be the first to join with me in sympathising with the disappointment of their fellow-competitors who ran them so exceptionally close.

The second prizes have been awarded to: ROBERT D. MARK, 37, Grosvenor Gardens, Jesmond, Newcastle-on-Tyne; and GORDON B. ELLIOTT, School House, Helpringham, Sleaford, Lincs.

Consolation prizes have been awarded to: H. W. POSNETT, Weston-super-Mare; H. C.

HOW A HIGHLANDER WON THE V.C.

Drawn by] [*Stanley L. Wood.*

Private Wilson, of the Highland Light Infantry, with a single companion rushed a German machine gun. His comrade dropped mortally wounded, but Private Wilson single-handed beat all the enemy to the ground, and brought back the gun in triumph.

BURTON, Uppingham; C. YOUNG, Gravesend; C. J. RICHARDS, Pontllanfraith; G. V. DODDERIDGE, Hereford; D. I. DUFF, Peterhead; G. R. BRADSHAW, Rochester; E. S. ROBSON, Bishop's Stortford; W. F. INGRAM, Gardenstown; K. HOLLINSHEAD, Stoke-on-Trent; L. N. SMITH, Lee, S.E.; G. P. T. WILLS, St. Bees; L. B. WILLIAMS, Cambridge; L. J. QUICK, Canterbury; G. A. STEIGMANN, York; A. D. C. JAMES, Horley; D. HINDS, Worthing; G. F. DUXBURY, Kilburn, N.W.; J. HAY, Leek; S. ROBINSON, Monkseaton.

With all those who just failed to gain a prize I honestly condole, and in the best of faith wish them better luck next time, for I know they will all accept their narrow defeat in a sporting spirit.

Omitting "Tourmonde," the correct list of answers was: Mons, Breslau, Koenigsberg, Louvain, Zanzibar, Liege, Maubeuge, Heligoland, Herbertshohe, Malines, Tsingtao, Madras, Jaroslav, Belgrade, Mulhausen, Innsbruck, Charleroi, Lorraine, Le Cateau.

F. Potter, captain of football, H.M.S. *Conway*.

Answers to Correspondents

Hobart.—Cannot trace promising you anything last January, though I remember having heard from you before. Write again, and give me further particulars. You will find that several of the authors and artists you name contribute to this number, and on another page you will find an announcement that will especially interest you. Many thanks for the information you send me.

B. S. N. (Cupar).—Your poem is not flawless, but I appreciate the sentiments it expresses.

Wag wants to know whether it would be possible, with enough impetus, to send a projectile to the moon. With *enough* impetus, and tolerably good marksmanship, I suppose it would; but I don't think the man in the moon need be apprehensive. He is not likely to be brought down too soon by this means. *He* hasn't had a German ultimatum yet, has he? This Young Wag hopes there will be snow at Christmas. The Old Fag, who is writing these replies a day or two before the festival, hopes there won't.

J. S. J. (Edinburgh).—The headquarters of the Canadian North-West Mounted Police are at Regina, Saskatchewan. I was informed a few months ago, however, that recruiting for this service had been stopped for a time.

F. A. C. N. (Stroud Green).—Thanks for your suggestion, but there will be many photographic plates of Lord Roberts to be purchased for quite small sums by the time this number appears.

Captainite (Ashton).—Typewritten entries in our competitions are eligible unless the contrary is stated or obviously implied.

N. F. S. imagines that I answer correspondents with a box of chocolates beside me, to help me along when I get bored. As a matter of fact I usually answer correspondents with Bask pacing near the door to discourage unwelcome intruders. Now, though you mightn't think it to look at him, nothing will tempt Bask from the stern path of duty so readily as chocolates. Bask and I had a real Christmas feast on the box you so kindly sent. My correspondent also wants to know how an author gets an artist to illustrate his stories. "Does the author go to a sort of meeting and choose one, or what?" That is a picture I like to dwell on: Brock, Whitwell, Hodgson, Soper, de Walton and the rest waiting ready to stand up for inspection when Warren Bell or Bourne Cooke arrives with his latest MS. The answer to your question, "N. F. S.," is that an author *doesn't* get an artist to illustrate his stories. He leaves that to the editor or publisher of his tale or book, though he may sometimes suggest an artist whom he thinks will do him justice. Of course, an author rarely admits that any artist does him perfect justice, and the artist's views on authors are on a similar kind. So it is just as well that there is an editor to come between them.

Acknowledgments and thanks are also due to **R. A.** (Willesden), **"Green," W. R. Perkin, C. L. Browne, "Iron Duke," T. C.** (Chester), **C. A. Arrol,** and **F. Gould.**

THE OLD FAG

BEFORE AND AFTER

Parkins Minor (despondently, as the visiting team arrives): "We haven't a chance!"

Parkins Minor (as the visiting team departs): "*Told* you we should beat them easily!"

The king made a sign, then suddenly the priests sprang upon them. Haughton was hurled backwards, and a blow that stunned him fell on his head as he went down.

THE SACRED DIAMOND

Relating the Perilous Adventures that Befell Two Young Britishers in the Lost City of the Incas

By THOMPSON CROSS — Illustrated by John de Walton

CHAPTER I

TOM SULLIVAN laughed drily, without any mirth in his voice.

"We're lunatics!" he said, shortly, sprawling out his arm as he lay in the thick grass, and plucking savagely at the hanging branch of a cinchona tree.

Gilbert Haughton stared across the stupendous ravine at their feet, and watched a great cataract that spouted, white and foaming, from the flank of the opposite mountain wall, without making answer. The faint thunder of the torrent reached his ears above the humming drone of a myriad insects and the soft hiss of the wind in the trees around them. High above them, where they stretched their insignificant littleness in the green grass of the mountain pampas, the snow-crowned peaks of the Andes gleamed in the sky, like a blue and white picture painted on the ceiling of the world. The wind came in alternate puffs, now cool and dry from the mountain-tops, now hot and moist and unhealthy from the far-away basin of the equatorial Amazon. Such a giant loneliness lay around them that they might have been plucked from the earth and flung upon another planet.

"I'm sick," Sullivan said, his eyes bright and weary. "Sick of these blessed mountains and—and the hugeness of this infernal wilderness. I want to look across a street. My eyes are tired of seeing things a hundred miles away whichever way they turn. I want to go back."

The fever was beginning to burn again in Tom Sullivan's veins. Gilbert Haughton knew that. It had always been about mid-day, all the ten days they had crawled in that titanic wilderness, when the hot gusts of air came stiflingly from the seething swamps beyond, that the last flicker of the fever which had prostrated Tom Sullivan in Lima a month before broke forth, and quenched all his adventurous humour and happy-go-lucky Irish nature for an hour or two. They had both been smitten, thanks to the abominable drinking water—Gilbert Haughton, son of the senior partner in the Peruvian Silver Amalgamating Corporation, and his chum Tom Sullivan, the company's young under-manager. So, when convalescence came, they had set off a week before upon that wild holiday in the Peruvian Andes, to seek health and strength, and——

"Like two giddy heroes in a penny blood-and-terror story," Sullivan said, bitterly. "searching for a mysterious race of people living inside a dead volcano, in order to restore one of the stolen eyes of their idol! Shade of R. M. Ballantyne! Bad enough coming to this place to get bucked up, without playing a kid's game like that!"

Gilbert Haughton flushed as he tilted his broad sun-hat on the back of his head. Sullivan's words were true enough, though he spoke them in the twisted peevishness of fever. It *did* seem a foolish thing when it was looked at in cold blood to think that in the inside pocket of his vest there was a big glimmering blue stone which was the eye of a great cat god worshipped by an unknown race of people, direct descendants of the Incas, who lived in the maw of an extinct volcano in the heart of the Andean wilderness. Gilbert Haughton stared across at the frothing cataract, and was lost in wonder at the preposterousness of the thing.

It had happened in Lima, just as he was recovering from the fever, in the little hospice above the town. A message had been brought to him from a half-caste, one Tito Diaz, who was dying from the kick of a horse, and wished to impart something of vast importance to the son of the English *caballero* who, years before, had saved his life and won his eternal gratitude. He had found the half-caste apparently at the point of death. He had wished to see the *caballero* himself, but Mr. Haughton had left the week before for England, on urgent business. So to his son he must tell his story and entrust a mission before he died.

Gilbert Haughton listened with a sense of dreaming to the story Diaz had to tell, of adventures after silver and gold and precious stones among the unknown valleys and plateaux of the Andes, of peril from cold and starvation, from sunstroke and fever and earthquake.

One day a great landslide swept the three companions of Diaz into a well-nigh bottomless trough, and, with a bruised body and a dazed brain, he had wandered for two days and nights in the mountain wilderness. At length, weak and exhausted, he stumbled and lost consciousness. When he recovered it was to find himself among a half-savage people who spoke a strange language, and had their city in the great scooped-out crater of an extinct volcano. The city was built in terraces upon the sides of the extinct crater, and was as rich and splendid as any city of the Incas before the Spaniards pillaged and ruined them. Except that they had cast aside sun worship, and, instead, worshipped a cat god which had its shrine in a great silver temple, the people of the volcano city were apparently the descendants of a fragment of the Incas who had taken refuge in the crater of the dead volcano when Pizarro and his men ravaged Peru. The wild legends and the droning songs of the Peruvians all spoke of the existence of such a city. Gilbert Haughton, as he sat listening to the dying man's whispered story, remembered that his father, whose passion was the history of the Incas, had spoken of some such vanished race.

Diaz lived in the volcano city for a month, seeing and sharing in many strange things. Then he escaped, taking with him a great blue stone, which was a coloured diamond of the first water, from one of the eyes of the cat god. It was this blue diamond which Tito Diaz took from beneath his pillow and handed to Gilbert Haughton, praying him to take it back to the people of the dead volcano, lest his soul, upon which the sin of violating the hospitality of the volcano city lay, should not find a resting-place after it had fled his body. The people of the dead volcano would give him whatever reward he asked for out of their vast riches. He would find the volcano where the city lay three days' journey northwards into the mountains from Cuzco, the ancient capital of the Incas. Diaz pressed a soiled piece of parchment into Haughton's hand. It was a map showing the route he must take from Cuzco. Upon it was marked plainly the position of the dead volcano. Its shape was that of a hooded man whose face was a vast precipice, and it was composed of porphyry and granite and gneiss, so that at mid-day, when the sun shone full upon it, it glowed like a thing that was full of white fire. He would climb to the brink of the crater, and there, in the lining of the great maw, blossoming now with gardens and woods, he would find the volcano city, built upon the silted lava of a hundred centuries.

So said Tito Diaz, praying Gilbert Haughton to keep the blue diamond, and to set out for the volcano city on the day of his death.

Two days later, the message came to Gilbert Haughton that Tito Diaz had died.

* * * * *

"We've been fooled," Sullivan said, gulping down a quinine capsule, and flinging the empty box over the rim of the ravine. "He was lying, that half-caste. There's no volcano shaped like a hooded man and gleaming white, as that map he gave you says there should be about here. There's no volcano city. A lot of jolly bunkum."

"Not been a bad holiday for all that," Haughton said, half wistfully. "And we came for that chiefly. I didn't believe the thing myself—hardly. Still, there's the blue diamond, you know."

"Glass!" Sullivan said, rolling over uneasily, and staring up at the great mountain-side above their heads. "I'll bet my hat. We should have struck the dead volcano by this time if there had been such a thing——"

Sullivan paused abruptly, gazing curiously at the piled-up terraces of rock above them.

Gilbert Haughton had taken a soiled morocco case from his vest pocket, and was looking a little longingly at the big flashing blue stone that nestled, almost the size of a pigeon's egg, among the shabby plush of the case. The absurdity of everything seemed to loom large as he gazed. The stone, if it were genuine, was worth a fortune itself. Yet a half-caste, dying in a hovel, had given it to him!

"Look up behind you!" Tom Sullivan said, suddenly.

Something in Sullivan's voice made Gilbert Haughton turn his head swiftly.

"Jehoshaphat!" he said, softly, rising slowly to his feet.

It was like the swift up-flash of an over-developed photographic print. A few minutes before, the steep hunch of the mountain, upon the lower slopes of which they sprawled, had been dull and grey. But now, as they gazed up through the trailing branches around them, the almost vertical sun struck a myriad points of light from the bright stone of the summit

above them. It was as though the mountain had been draped by magic in shining white.

"There's the dead volcano," Gilbert Haughton said, quite calmly, though his pulse was throbbing strangely, and his throat had become suddenly dry with excitement. "Just as the map shows. It's shaped like a hooded man, too. We couldn't notice that from the valley. But it's plain enough now."

They stood in silence for a full minute, staring at the piled-up terraces of rock. Tom Sullivan took his Zeiss glasses from their case.

"Something like a path up there," he said, the glasses at his eyes. "Seems a natural terrace that runs round the mountain, and along the side of the precipice there. My aunt, it *is* a precipice, too!"

"Come along!" Haughton said, his voice a little unsteady.

The fever had dropped from Tom Sullivan, and his face was keen and eager. They had both forgotten that in that hot mid-day, the heat among the blinding rocks above would be like the reverberation of a furnace. Haughton took the glasses, and saw that the ledge of rock which his chum had pointed out seemed to wind upwards in a gradual spiral to the top of the mountain, passing in a long rising shelf along the vast sheer precipice which was the face of the hooded man.

It called for half an hour of silent climbing before they reached the ledge. The wind was like the hot air of an oven struck through at intervals with a breath as cold as the touch of ice. They seemed to have scrambled upon the very roof of the world where the air dried and choked their throats, as they inhaled it. As they neared the wall of the precipice, and the great wilderness of silent mountains and ravines unrolled itself in a stroke of dizzy sickness beneath them, Tom Sullivan spoke shortly.

"On your knees, old man!" he said.

They both dropped on all-fours as the narrow, upward-sloping ledge ran abruptly on to the face of the precipice. Haughton kept his eyes grimly on the dusty brown rock where he crawled, as the hot wind plucked at him. A horrible feeling of being suspended over the very bottomless pit of the world assailed him for a second and unsteadied his nerve. Now and then, little dancing whirligigs of dust blinded him. A condor flapped with the hoarse, snorting cry of the species above his head, and the wind of its wings filled him with unreasoning panic at the thought of the delicate poise of his body on that yard and a half wide aerial ledge. He knew that they should have roped themselves with the long manila cord that was in the inside pocket of his coat, but the excitement had been too swift to think of that.

He turned his head to Tom Sullivan, crawling behind him, with an odd impulse of laughter at his crimson and perspiring face.

"Should find something, after a flog like this," he said, lying his length for a moment on the hot rock, and closing his eyes to steady his swimming brain. "Dunno what——"

"Look out!" Sullivan jerked in an unfamiliar voice.

Gilbert Haughton looked over his shoulder with a leaping heart. Later, he looked upon the whole thing, and everything that followed, as within the realm of miracles. But at the moment he was conscious only that something he had hardly dared to expect had come to pass.

Abruptly, as they sprawled on the ribbon of rock, between earth and sky, a hole gaped in the sheer wall of rock at their side. In the dim opening that blotted the sun-beaten rock blackly, half a dozen men stood against the great mass of rock which had rolled silently backwards. Haughton saw in the flash of time that followed that the hands of three of them were uplifted, with something gleaming between their fingers. In the same second, Tom Sullivan rolled over, snatched his Webley-Fosbery, and levelled it, as the three men leapt out at them.

Gilbert Haughton stretched out his leg, and kicked aside Tom Sullivan's outstretched arm.

"Chuck it!" he said, swiftly. "They're the people of the volcano, you ninny!"

He sprang to his feet, all his sick dizziness gone, groping in his vest pocket, his eyes ablaze with excitement. One of the men, a big brown Indian with a puma skin around his otherwise naked body, made a fierce lunge at Haughton with the ugly copper knife that was uplifted in his hand. Just in time, Haughton stepped aside and caught him a swinging blow on the point of his chin that made him reel backwards. Then, quick as lightning, he took the blue diamond from its case, and held it aloft in his fingers.

"Look at that, you beggars!" he said, between his set teeth.

For several full seconds the group of men hung back snarling in the aperture of rock. Then, suddenly, one of them gave a guttural cry and fell to his knees, his knife tinkling on the hard rock.

"Done it!" Gilbert Haughton said, with an unsteady laugh. "Come along, old man!"

They stepped together into the opening in the rock.

CHAPTER II

BEHIND them, the mass of rock closed with a dull crash, shutting out the fierce sunlight, and leaving only a flickering bluish light from the spattering flame of half a dozen silver cruses of oil which burned somewhere overhead.

Gilbert Haughton and Tom Sullivan drew near to each other, with their bodies thrilling. The young Irishman still held his revolver, his fingers playing nervously with the trigger, his keen eyes moving swiftly.

"We'll be after keeping a keen look-out on these skellens," he said, in a whisper, breaking into the brogue of his native land as he always did in moments of excitement.

"Come along," Haughton said.

He began to move forward through the dimness and, silently, the Indians closed on either side and behind them. The passage was apparently cut through the very flank of the dead volcano. For fifty yards or so ahead it was lit at intervals with the burning cruses. Then a shimmer of faint daylight filtered through the darkness, and the passage began to fall steeply. A puff of cool air fanned Haughton's flushed face as he moved forward with head erect and the fingers of his hand closed firmly over the blue diamond, and, abruptly, as the passage curved, the clean-cut vision of a sunny city, built upon the sloping sides of a vast basin, streaked with narrow streets and broken with white towers and walls of shining granite, flashed before his eyes like the little round miniature of a scene that is looked at through the wrong end of a telescope.

"Glory!" Sullivan said, in an awed voice. "The volcano city, sure!"

They broke out from the subterranean passage a minute later into the sunlight, and stood spellbound. Around them, in a vast amphitheatre, climbing in terraces up the dead crater of the volcano, a bunch of stone houses shining in a bower of trees and flowers here, an imposing cluster of buildings, splashed with little gleams of silver, there, was the city. It struck Haughton that the volcano, when it had spouted flame a thousand centuries before, must have been the biggest fire-valve in all the hot, smoking world. The hardened lava had long since filled up the gigantic hole from which the fire had leapt, and in the centre of the fertile slopes of the volcano city a great gleaming temple of porphyry stood at the summit of a wide flight of steps, shrined in a bower of flaming gardens. Above, the sun beat down into the scooped-out hollow where the city lay. But the cool wind from the snow-crowned Andes outside tempered the heat to a gentle softness. In the streets of the city, people were passing to and fro—slim, brown-skinned men, dressed in a garment of woven llama and vicuna skin, with head-dresses of condor feathers, and women in shoulder-cloaks of coloured silk.

"There's the temple," Gilbert Haughton said, pointing to the big building at the top of he wide steps. "Either that or the palace."

Sullivan made a noise that was half a bewildered laugh and half a gurgle of wonderment

"Lead on, Macduff!" he said.

To both of them the persistent feeling was that of having stepped into the midst of a fantastic dream. As they entered the narrow street that led up to the gleaming flight of steps ahead the people drew aside with little murmurs of wonderment and fear, and bent forward to the silent bodyguard of skin-clad men who followed behind, speaking in a curious liquid language which, Gilbert Haughton noticed, had some resemblance to the *Quichua* of the Sierra Indians. The skin-clad men only inclined their heads to the questioning of the people, and pointed ahead to the steps of the white temple.

They reached the base of the wide steps, and began to ascend. At the same instant a bell—long, clear, and melodious—sounded in the building above them. For a moment it thrilled Gilbert Haughton with a sense of drama and mystery. Sullivan tightened his lips.

"Keep close, Gil," he said, a little hoarsely, "and be ready for anything."

Haughton gripped the blue stone in his hot hand. At the top of the steps, in the pillared entrance to the temple, two white-bearded old men stood, clothed from head to foot in brilliant blue robes. As they approached, the bodyguard fell to their knees. Gilbert Haughton climbed the last of the steps doggedly, with Tom Sullivan at his heels. The two old men held up their hands threateningly, their dark eyes smouldering.

"Up with the stone, old man!" Sullivan said, swiftly.

Haughton held the blue diamond aloft between his finger and thumb. The effect upon the two old men was instantaneous. One of them, with a guttural cry, made as though to snatch at the stone; but Haughton held fast, pointing to the cool blue shadows of the temple interior. The other dropped laboriously to his knees, and stopped there, beating the ground rhythmically with his hands.

"To your King!" Haughton said, with a sudden inspiration, groping among the

knowledge of the *Quichua* language which his father had taught him.

From the shadow, at that moment, the tall figure of a man, clad in the golden-dyed fleece of a vicuna, bearing a casque of gold upon his head, walked slowly, with folded arms, to the top of the steps. At the sight of him the two old men fell prostrate. Half-way down the steps the skin-clad bodyguard grovelled. In the wide streets below, the crowd of people which had followed them fell flat on their faces.

The man spoke in a deep voice, holding forth his arm with a commanding gesture.

"I am the King, O stranger!" he said. "What would you have with me, and why do you come thus from the world outside, treading with careless feet the stair of the Temple of Azico?"

Gilbert Haughton moistened his dry lips.

"We bring the blue eye of Azico which was stolen many moons ago, O King!" he said.

A darker colour swept the hawk face of the King, and an eager light leapt into his eyes.

"The blue eye of Azico, ye say!" he said, swiftly. "If it be the truth that ye speak, stranger with the white face, all the riches of my city shall be at your disposal; for since the treacherous mongrel, who was neither white nor dark, stole it from Azico there has been fire and misfortune, and pestilence, and strange rumblings in the bowels of the earth beneath us which have affrighted us all."

"Behold, then, the eye of Azico!" Gilbert Haughton said, boldly, holding forth the blue diamond.

The bright sunlight caught the stone, and turned it to living fire in Haughton's fingers. The King of the volcano city made a gesture of reverence. Then he moved to a big granite pillar where a cluster of silver bells hung, and pulled at a gold cord. The melodious jangle went echoing through the temple. From all the soft shadows around bearded old men came gliding.

"Priests!" Sullivan said, under his breath. "Pinch me, Gil!"

The King turned with a courtly motion.

"Enter the temple, O strangers!" he said. "The anger of Azico will not fall upon those who bring back his stolen eye."

"Jolly polite!" Sullivan murmured. His fingers were still on the Webley-Fosbery in his pocket.

They followed the King into the dim twilight of the temple. The cloying fragrance of burning aromatic gums and flowers struck their nostrils, and Haughton saw the thin blue smoke of censers in the midst of the vast hall which opened before them. He heard Sullivan draw in his breath with amazement, for the hall, he saw at a glance, was a great chamber of silver and gold, lined from floor to ceiling with the precious metal as a tea-box is lined with lead-foil. It struck Haughton swiftly that there must be a silver mine of incalculable wealth somewhere in the volcano city. There were splashes of gold, too, inlaid here and there, and the great shrine, towards which the King walked with unsandalled feet, was powdered with rubies and diamonds. In the centre of it, an exquisitely modelled figure of a great cat stood fashioned in solid silver, gleaming with one blue eye that was the fellow of the stone which Haughton held in his hand. From behind it a tall, sombre-faced priest, with a beard down to his waist, advanced and bowed slightly.

"The high priest," Sullivan said, "judging by the long beard and the short kow-tow."

The King turned to Haughton and spoke again. His voice was very suave. Save for a difference in the intonation, he spoke the language of the modern Incas, which Haughton understood well enough.

"The *Villac* will take the eye of Azico," he said.

The high priest advanced and took the blue diamond from Haughton. A deep silence fell upon the great temple chamber. The King stood erect, his clean-cut features immobile. Behind him Gilbert Haughton and Tom Sullivan stood, strange figures in their dusty mountaineering suits against that background picture of savage civilisation. Behind them, the lesser priests of the temple, a score in number, stood like figures carved in coloured stone.

Haughton was conscious of a tightened sensation at his throat, and the feeling of a gambler who had thrown his all and waited the result. So silent was everything that he could hear the purr of the burning gum in the censers, and the tread of the high priest's bare feet as he moved across to the figure of the cat god.

His back was turned as he reached up to the empty socket with the stone. Seconds passed and seemed like minutes.

"He's fumbling!" Sullivan whispered.

Haughton saw that his forehead was wet and his face rather white.

Quite suddenly the high priest swung round with his face distorted and the blue stone uplifted in his hand. Then, with a noise that was like a snarl, he flung the blue stone on the porphyry floor of the temple so that it smashed like a dropped tumbler into a thousand fragments.

"Diddled, by my soul!" Tom Sullivan said, in a soft voice. "It's false!"

Gilbert Haughton stood with a numb feeling creeping around his heart, staring down at the fragments of the blue stone on the floor. A little murmur passed through the line of priests behind. The high priest stood with his lips moving like a man in apoplexy. A savage stain of colour had swept into the King's dark face.

"Sacrilege!" The words came furiously from the mouth of the high priest. "They seek to deceive Azico, the chalk-faced strangers! It is not the eye of Azico! It is glass. See, O King, how it has smashed at their very feet, and confounded them."

"Look alive!" Sullivan grated, leaping back.

The King had made a lightning-like sign, and from behind, without sound of any kind, the priests sprang upon them. Sullivan's revolver shattered the echoes deafeningly, and brought down a gold cornice from the wall of the temple with a clatter. Haughton was groping for his in his pocket when a gigantic priest bore him to the slippery floor, struggling. Years later, Haughton remembered the hairy touch of the man's beard on his face and the sweet smell that clung to him. He heard Sullivan's revolver crash again, and the staccato cry of pain that followed it. Then fingers at his throat blotted out sight with dancing black spots and quenched hearing with a humming roar that filled his ears. He kicked savagely and desperately, though all the while there was black hopelessness in his heart, and had the satisfaction of seeing one of his assailants hop about agonisedly for a few moments with his bare shin in his hand. Then, in a swift stroke, a blow dropped on his temple that drowned the feeling of cold rage in his heart in a sensation of stunned sickness. Something seemed to blow up in his brain, and he knew nothing more.

CHAPTER III

DARKNESS, broken only by the dim glimmer of an oil cruse, was around Gilbert Haughton when he raised himself unsteadily upon one arm.

"Right, Gil?"

Sullivan's voice came from the dimness by his side. The young Irishman bent over him with his clothes in ribbons, his face haggard, and a little dried clot of blood on his forehead. Haughton closed his eyes for a moment, and, opening them again, saw that they lay on the rocky floor of a great chamber that seemed to stretch to infinite darkness on every side. The air was hot and dry, and bit the lungs painfully.

"Bit groggy," he said; "that's all. Where have they shoved us?"

Sullivan laughed drily.

"Dunno!" he said. "Been asleep myself. One of those scugs hit me hard with some kind of a club as I was half twisting his head off. They've dished us, Gil. Strikes me, by the smell and the hothouse atmosphere, that they've pushed us inside the old volcano in a part where it's not yet cooled off."

He rose a little swayingly to his feet. The light of the oil cruse was a mere feeble flicker. Beyond it was darkness. Gilbert Haughton watched, half dazed, as the blackness swallowed up Sullivan.

A sharp cry in Sullivan's voice, followed by a chuckle of hoarse laughter, jerked his senses clear, and he scrambled to his feet with a swift-beating heart. Sullivan appeared within the dim circle of light with his face white and startled. Behind him the figure of a little man limped, chuckling and coughing. Haughton saw in a swift glance that he was a white man, though the skin of his face was all drawn and cracked, and he was almost naked. As he drew near the light, it became evident that he was as hairless as a billiard ball. Neither had he eyebrows nor eyelashes. He stood blinking at the burning cruse with his bloodshot eyes, as a bat might blink at a brilliant searchlight. Now and then he broke into a fit of chuckling that always rasped off in a hard, hacking cough.

"You were nearly gone then, señor," he said in Spanish, his voice hoarse and rusty. "The hole bit at you, but I pulled you from its teeth just in time."

He cackled again, his drawn, cracked face distorted.

"There's a hole in the floor of this infernal place as big as a pit-shaft," Sullivan said, shortly. Haughton saw that he was trembling like a man whose nerve has just been shattered. "I was on the brink of it before I knew. It's as black as Erebus. I felt my foot step on empty air, and was just toppling over when this poor beggar caught me. He's dotty, I think, but he saved my life."

Sullivan dropped his head in his hands for a moment. The little man sat upon the rocky floor, and coughed consumedly. It was evident to both the chums that he was far gone in consumption.

Suddenly he put his head on one side like one listening.

"It comes!" he cried, leaping to his feet. "The fire comes to greet the strangers."

Sullivan took the man by the shoulders and swung him round.

"What's that?" he demanded. "Fire?"

The man nodded, a demented light on his scarred face.

"You are in the fire chamber of the volcano city, señor," he said. "Did you not know? The fire comes every other hour up the hole into which you nearly stumbled. You will not like it. I did not like it at first when the people of the volcano flung me here. It scorched and burned. But now it is the breath that gives me life, señors. But for it the cough from which I suffer would kill me. Listen!"

He held out his arms to the hole in the blackness beyond the flickering light. Haughton and Sullivan, listening with a thrill of horror at the madman beside them, heard a noise like a great purr of flame in the depths of the earth, growing louder and nearer every second.

"It's coming!" Haughton said, his body tense and shrinking.

"Me first, old man," said Sullivan, and a second later he disappeared into the blackness of the hole that led to the boiling river.

In the centre of the chamber a flickering red glow leapt and quivered inside the lips of a great jagged hole in the rocky floor, brightening momentarily and filling the chamber with radiance. A hot gust of stifling air struck their faces. A noise like the singing of a great dynamo filled their ears, and seemed to thrill the ground beneath their feet. Then, like a gigantic flash of lightning, a blinding cloud of flame leapt from the hole in the floor and filled the chamber as water fills a vessel. Gilbert Haughton was conscious of a spasm of the keenest agony he had ever felt in his life as the flame licked in a red mist around him, filling his nostrils with the smell of his singeing hair and burning clothes, draining his strength and nerve like the tongue of a vampire. Then, abruptly, it passed, and they heard it roaring for a moment in the vault of the great roof above their heads.

Haughton fought for breath in the choking blue smoke that filmed the light of the guttering lamp. Sullivan was staring at him stupidly. The clothes of both of them hung in charred ribbons.

"Another like that——" Sullivan said.

His voice was cracked and his blackened face looked fierce and unfamiliar.

He bent down and picked up the cruse, thrusting aside the Spaniard, who was on his knees hugging his scorched arms horribly, and crawling towards the brink of the pit whence the flame had come. He held the light aloft as he explored the darkness, groping with

his outstretched hand for some wall. He touched it at length, so far away from where Gilbert Haughton still sat that the light of the cruse was a mere pinprick, and groped cautiously along with hands and feet. Within a minute the light of the lamp shone upon a massive door of copper built in the solid rock. Sullivan flung himself savagely at it; but it was as immobile as the rock itself.

He groped his way back to Haughton.

"No use!" he said, bitterly. "We're done. There's no way out."

The Spaniard laughed softly. Haughton felt sick at the sight of his demented face.

"Why trouble, señors?" he said, flicking his fire-crippled fingers. "It is cold in the world outside where the snow shines on the mountains all day, and the frost sweeps down on the wind at night. But here it is always warm. The flame warms the cold blood. The boiling river always keeps the fire chamber from growing chilly in the intervals between the flame——"

"The boiling river!" Haughton broke in swiftly. "What's that?"

The Spaniard turned his insane eyes, bright and bloodshot.

"Follow me," he said, "and listen!"

He dropped on all-fours, and began to crawl across the rocky floor of the chamber. Haughton took up the still-burning cruse, and the two of them followed to the rim of the great hole that yawned in the darkness.

"Listen!" the Spaniard said.

The smoke of the flame still curled from the hole and half stifled them. But listening there in the inner silence of the volcanic rock, their ears caught the steady liquid roar of water echoing faintly far down in the black heart of the smoking shaft before them

"It is the boiling river," the Spaniard said, "and comes forth, as from the spout of a gigantic kettle, from the wall of a ravine in the cold world outside the volcano city. I saw it before the people of the volcano captured me as I climbed up the narrow path which their skin-clad soldiers guard by the moving rock. I know it is the same stream, for it comes from the very side of the dead volcano wherein the city is built. Once I thought I might escape by means of it, for the people of the volcano swore that I came to spy upon their city and deliver it to the descendants of Pizarro who ravaged their ancestors, and threatened me with death. But when I had tasted the flame once or twice, I could not leave it."

Neither Haughton nor Sullivan was listening to the man. A swift flush of hope had struck them both.

"And how—how would you have escaped by the boiling river?" Haughton asked, a little unsteadily.

The Spaniard shrugged his shoulders.

"I thought of lowering down the hole the bed which the people of the volcano gave me when they imprisoned me here," he said, "and floating down the boiling river upon it. But I had nothing wherewith to lower it, no ropes or anything that could help me. And then the flame came back and bade me stay."

"There's his bed!" Sullivan said, quickly, moving across the chamber. "It's just a tree, by Jove! split down the middle, and hollowed out a bit!"

Haughton stared at the rough segment of a rosewood tree which lay hollowed out carelessly near by.

"The ropes 'ud hold it," he said, slowly, feeling in the big inside pocket of his scorched jacket for the slender manila climbing rope which lay there. "They're strong; but we may be jumping out of the frying-pan into the—the boiling kettle. If the river beneath there is really boiling it's no go."

Sullivan laughed grimly.

"It's either that or making a dash out when the man who looks after us comes in, and running amuck through the city until we get filled like pin-cushions with spears, and arrows, and what-not, or staying here until we grow as dotty as this poor beggar," he said.

Haughton shivered a little at the memory of the flame.

"Righto!" he said. "We'll chance the underground river if the ropes are long enough."

It was evident that they would not be troubled by any interruptions from outside, for a little pile of maize bread and fresh fruit lay beside the Spaniard's rough bed. Apparently, it had been flung there when the two chums had been taken into the chamber unconscious. With it, the still-burning lamp had been left.

"The hole's too hot yet," Sullivan said. "We shall have to wait until it cools."

They sat in silence, listening to the faint, far-away roar of the underground river and the incessant coughing of the Spaniard as he squatted on the rocky floor gazing in the direction of the hole. Sullivan took up the cruse and extinguished it.

"We shall need it later," he said. "Lucky I put the matches in my silver box. The flame never touched them."

Silence fell upon them. The old sensation of

dreaming came upon Gilbert Haughton in the blackness that was like a hot velvet curtain around them. His thoughts went to the blue diamond. It had been false, that was apparent; though, piece of glass that it had been, it had plunged them into a strange adventure which seemed to hold but one way out, and that a very desperate one. He wondered whether Tito Diaz had known the stone to be false.

The close, stifling atmosphere and the impenetrable darkness must have caused Haughton's weary brain to sink into a doze, for he awoke with a start to see Sullivan kindling the cruse again, and sprang up blinking.

"Cool enough now, I think," Sullivan said.

They went across to the big piece of wood that had served the Spaniard as a bed, and dragged it with some difficulty to the edge of the hole that gaped in the centre of the chamber. Haughton took forth the climbing rope and passed the body-noose of it firmly round the trunk. The Spaniard did not take his eyes from the hole.

"Lower away!" Sullivan said, stuffing his knapsack into a crevice at the lip of the hole.

Very slowly the big thing tilted over the edge of the hole, the sliding rope running over the knapsack in the crevice. Even yet, the heat from the hole was like a furnace. But they hung doggedly to the rope. Its length was a little less than a hundred feet. If it were too short!

They had almost reached the end of it, and a queer sense of sick despair was beginning to strike at Haughton's heart, when a swift pluck, that was for all the world like the stroke of a big fish, quivered the rope and all but wrenched the remaining length of it from their hands.

"It's reached the water, by jingo!" Sullivan said, hoarsely. "Hold fast, Gil!"

He groped round with the cruse, seeking to find some jutting of rock on the floor of the chamber. For a moment the quest seemed hopeless. Then, just inside the rim of the hole, he caught sight of a blackened fang of rock that shot forth like a gargoyle.

He bent down and knotted the rope swiftly and firmly.

"There's the boat moored fast," he said, straightening himself. "We've only to swarm down to it and trust to——"

He broke off with a grunt as he swung himself down to the rope before Haughton could prevent him.

"Me first, old man," he said, his head just visible in the blackness of the hole. "If it's all right I'll sing out. If it's not——"

He had disappeared a second later, and Haughton lay his length to stare anxiously at the convulsive rope. The heat was like the warm breath of a kiln, and a thin film of smoke still curled upwards out of the chasm. He could hear the river clearly.

Sullivan's voice swam upwards faintly, after what seemed an eternity of time:—

"Right-o-o!"

Haughton scrambled to his feet, and turned to the Spaniard.

"Come along," he said. "We're getting away by the boiling river."

The Spaniard smiled gently with his insane eyes.

"It is foolish, señor," he said. "But go if you will. I stay here. The fire comes shortly to warm my chilled lungs."

He coughed rackingly. Haughton knew by an instinct that the man had not many days to live.

"Come along," he said again, with a twinge of pity.

The man turned away and walked into the shadowy darkness of the chamber.

"I await the fire," he said, simply, from the darkness.

"Look sharp, Gil!"

Sullivan's voice came from the depths of the hole. Haughton laid the cruse, which was now burning very low, on the jut of rock which held the straining rope, and lowered himself cautiously. The black wall of the fire-shaft, lit faintly by the beams of the lamp above, slipped past as he dropped hand over hand. He became aware of a roar of noise increasing in volume, and thought at first that it was the rush of the river as he dropped nearer to it. Then something familiar in the thrilling purr of it stopped his heart for a second.

He stopped dead, swinging hesitatingly on the rope. Then he saw that within a few feet of him, in the side of the shaft, was the square-shaped opening of a passage running horizontally far underground. From that the familiar roar reached his ears, and as he gazed a white glow of light, growing in intensity each moment, lit up the passage and sent a glow out into the shaft where he hung. A breath of scorching air struck him as he gazed, and the light seemed to leap along the passage towards him as the white-hot fluid might burst from an exploded blast-furnace.

"The fire!"

Haughton slid swiftly and recklessly down the rope. Sullivan standing in the darkness on the swaying log of wood that was the

centre of a lashing tumult of hot water, caught him.

"Cut off!" Haughton said, incoherently. "The fire's coming along the passage above there. If any of it comes down here——!"

He knew that if the sheet of fire which the burning heart of the underworld flung out from the dead volcano at intervals spilled over upon them from its natural course it would lick them up as a match licks up tissue paper.

"Cut it!" he said again, groping for his clasp-knife.

From the opening in the shaft above them a quivering tongue of blue flame flung itself in the second that Tom Sullivan slashed with all his strength at the straining rope.

"Duck down and stick fast!" Sullivan said, swiftly.

The rope snapped with a little twang, and the crazy log upon which they had staked the last desperate cast for their lives leapt into the turmoil of hot water.

Darkness fell about them like a solid thing. Haughton and Sullivan crouched inside the shallow dug-out portion and clung fast as the swift current caught the log and sent it lurching through the blackness. There was no sense of movement save when, now and then, they jarred against the sides of the narrow tunnel down which the boiling river ran. The water as it splashed upon them was hot, though it did not scald them, and the atmosphere was stifling. Occasionally a cooler whiff of air gave them hope. The roar of the water bewildered Haughton, and his heart was beating painfully. Once, Sullivan shouted something, but he could not hear the words. The thought that the roof of the passage might slope suddenly and spill them from the log to die like rats in the watery darkness unnerved him for a moment, but he thrust it aside doggedly.

"Look ahead!"

Sullivan bent down to his ear and bawled the words. The blackness around was stained with grey. Ahead, he saw, with a leaping pulse, a spot of bright daylight glowed as bright as the glass of a reflector. The log to which they clung swept as a straw sweeps along a swollen gutter. They must have travelled three or four miles within ten minutes. He saw, as he stared, that the outlet of the boiling river was framed with trailing foliage, and that the water near it was smooth and shining, as water becomes at the edge of a cataract.

"Be ready to stick like blazes to the trees there as the log shoots out!"

He heard Sullivan's voice mechanically, as the daylight loomed nearer and bigger. The log lurched rhythmically. They were both standing on their feet, their lips set and their eyes strained.

"Now!"

Sullivan's voice broke as he shouted, and they sprang simultaneously to each side of the rushing log. They had a couple of seconds to get a grip of the stout liana branches and cacao trees that trailed across the outlet. For a moment they seemed to swing in air over a breathless gorge with a swift vision of a log of rosewood dropping like a great projectile through the space beneath them, in the midst of a white caratact of steaming water. Then, blinking and half dazed in the blazing sunlight, they climbed slowly to the ledge of brown rock above, and sat in silence with their hands shading their blinded eyes.

Sullivan spoke incongruously.

"Told you it was false," he said. "That stone!"

* * * * *

They sat in the shady villa on the hill slopes of Lima, which belonged to Haughton's father, four days later. Mr. Haughton, newly returned from England, sat smoking his pipe thoughtfully.

"Tito Diaz was seeking revenge," he said, slowly. "I see it quite clearly. He and I stumbled upon the volcano city five years ago when first I came to Peru. We were prospecting out on the sierras there. They treated us hospitably, though they are savages. But Diaz filled his pockets full of loot the day before we decided to go away together. I knocked him down, and made him put back the gold and stones he had stolen. Later, I knew, he had kept the blue eye of the cat god. He has always hated me since then. I suppose his way of getting his own back was to have an imitation stone made of glass and to send you with it back to the volcano city. You could have proved its falseness in a moment if you had let an expert examine it. Diaz sold the genuine stone for a few reales when he was down on his luck, and I have not heard of it since. But I suppose you were too anxious to begin the adventure to think of having it examined. I am to blame myself, perhaps, for not telling you of the volcano city. Tito Diaz has always kept quiet about it too, and I dare say he hopes to dip his fingers into the pie again at some future time."

"He's dead, anyway, now," Gilbert said.

Mr. Haughton laughed.

"He was seen on the road to Callao with a mule that wasn't his own the day before yesterday," he said. "He lies now in the gaol here. The touching deathbed scene was all pretence."

A Night on the North Sea

Telling of a Thrilling Adventure with a German Mine-Layer

By R. H. FORSTER — Illustrated by Gerald Leake, R.B.A.

I

MY people had taken a house for August and September within a mile of North Sunderland, on the northern part of the Northumberland coast, and within sight of Bamburgh and the Farne Islands. North Sunderland has a little harbour, where in most seasons crowds of herring-boats come at this time of year. My brother, Dick, and I took a great interest in the place; it was great sport to see the boats come in and unload their catches, and we made many friends about the harbour on the very first day after our arrival; but then came the beginning of the war, and the end of the herring-fishing, or very nearly so.

But though the big boats went elsewhere, a few of the local fishermen kept their cobles in commission and occasionally did a bit of line-fishing, and sometimes we went a short voyage with them. We had little of my father's company except at meal times; he was busy writing a book to prove that the invasion of England was impossible, and so he couldn't pretend that there was any real danger if we sailed a few miles out with George Tuggal, who was our chief nautical crony. As for my mother and sisters, they caught the knitting fever at once—and badly. Generally we left the house directly after breakfast with our lunch in our pockets. Even the cook was intent on knitting bed-socks, and the more trouble we saved her, the better for the wounded.

We did not always go fishing. We had a fair amount of pocket-money, and George Tuggal was glad enough to let us hire his coble and himself for a whole day at a very low charge. Often we made a voyage to the Farne Islands, often to Lindisfarne, and sometimes even to Berwick. Generally George took his son Joe to help with the boat, and we supplied enough provisions for the four. Joe was a short, thick-set lad, about a year older than Dick and myself, who were twins of fifteen and a half; but he knew as much about sailing a coble as his father, and a coble is the trickiest to sail of any craft that floats.

It was on the eighth of September that we began our great voyage. We had planned to sail out to beyond the Longstone, the outermost of the Farne Islands, then make a board to Lindisfarne, the wind being south-westerly, and so beat home through the Inner Fairway, between the islands and Bamburgh; but the breeze was very light and fitful, little more than enough to give us steerage way, and it was past noon when we came abreast of the Longstone. Then the wind died away altogether, and we stowed the sail, rowed to the island, and landed. George knew the lighthouse-keeper well, and we had seen him two or three times. We sat on the rocks to eat our lunch, and the calm continued, but the lighthouse-keeper warned us that we had better make an early start and row back.

"It's calm enough now," he said, "but look you at old Cheviot and the clouds above him. That means wind from the west before long, and plenty of it. You know that, George Tuggal, or if you don't, it's no fault of my not telling you."

"Oh, aye, it means wind," George answered, "but not as much as you say—just a canny bit breeze that'll need a single reef, and take us to Holy Island in next to no time."

"Take you to Denmark or Germany," exclaimed the lighthouse man. 'You North Sunderland folk think you know everything, but you can't see Cheviot from in-bye yonder, and I've watched him every day for twenty years. I tell you, man, he's in a bad temper, and you'd best start off and row at once. Aye, row by the north side of the islands, and head for Budle Bay; if you go south about, you may get blown on the Crumstone, if the wind should come with a bit of south in it."

"Well, well," said George; "north about will take us on our way to Holy Island, and sitting in a boat's as easy as sitting on a rock."

We got aboard, and, of course, Dick and I volunteered to row. Joe managed the long stern oar, and did little more than keep the boat straight. My stars! It was different

rowing from what we had done at school, and it was no use trying to show the form which the captain of the eight had said was not half bad when we helped him to win the house fours. The oars were long and heavy, with flat looms and narrow blades, and they didn't work in rowlocks, but had an iron loop at the back which went over a wooden pin on the gunwale.

However, Dick and I were no shirkers, and we managed to get some way on the coble; though we soon found that it was no good trying to punch her above a certain pace. But the lighthouse man was right: the wind began to come again in puffs and squalls, and soon it blew steadily. We stopped rowing and hoisted the sail, but hardly had George made the halyards fast when we had to lower again and reef; by the time the reef was in the wind called for two and was still increasing, and to save certain trouble we close-reefed the sail before we hoisted it again. It was now blowing furiously, though as yet there was not much sea, and even with our tiny bit of canvas the coble's lee gunwale was almost awash, though Dick, Joe, and I were sitting out as far to windward as we could get. At last even George Tuggal began to be anxious, and threw her head up into the wind.

"I doubt we can't carry on while this squall lasts," he said. "Down with the sail, lads We must rig up a sea-anchor, and lie by for better weather."

We got the sail down with some difficulty, and George and his son worked like demons, while the coble drifted broadside on to the waves, and began to wallow, as the sea was rising. However, before things got very bad, they had rigged up a sea-anchor with the reefed sail and a couple of oars; the mast was unstepped and lowered, and presently the coble was riding head to windward; the wallowing stopped, but she pitched a bit, though less as time went on and the waves grew longer.

If things got no worse we were fairly safe from being swamped or capsized; but we had drifted a good way out to sea while the anchor was being rigged, and we were drifting still, though at a much slower pace. The wind was blowing great guns, and, as the lighthouse man had said, there was some prospect of our first making land on the coast of Denmark, but more of our being run down during the night; we had no lights, very little food, and not more than a quart of water. George, however, was quite unconcerned.

"The wind's bound to drop sudden after coming sudden," he said; 'and if it doesn't, we'll trust to the British Navy—the papers say it's busy sweeping the North Sea—or maybe there'll be a trawler lying handy some where, and we'll signal to her for help."

Dick and I felt encouraged, but our confidence didn't last very long. Only the top of Bamburgh Castle and the summit of Cheviot were in sight now; everything else was sea, with neither a wisp of smoke nor a sign of a sail to be seen.

"It's Denmark this trip," said I to Dick, "and we shall have a job getting back, unless the war comes to an end this week."

"What about mines?" said Dick. "Have we draught enough to hit them, George?"

"I don't quite know," George replied. If we do hit one, we shan't know who's hurt us."

It was not a cheerful prospect. There were we, trying to ride out a gale in an open boat and slowly drifting farther and farther away from England, with every chance of drowning, starving, or being blown up.

II

In due time the sun set, and now there was a sea-horizon in the west for it to sink behind, with a stormy sky above; not even the top of Cheviot was in sight. However, the moon rose not long after the darkness set in; it was only four days past the full, and gave a fair amount of light when the clouds would let it, and they were being gradually torn to pieces by the wind. George and his son sat in the bottom of the boat and smoked stolidly, but Dick and I were keen on keeping watch. At last we caught sight of something black very nearly to leeward of us. I told George, and he got on his feet to look.

"It's a steam trawler," he said, "and best part of a mile away. We'll just drift as we go for a while and make sure of missing her nets, if she has them out; but I fancy she's lying to for the wind to drop, with her engines working just enough to keep her where she is. We'll go as we are till we're near abeam of her. The wind's slackening a bit."

Yes, the wind was moderating every moment, and the clouds growing thinner. We could make out the shape of the trawler quite clearly by this time: she was a small steamer of perhaps a hundred tons, and she evidently had steam up, though she didn't appear to

"Lower your sail, or we'll sink you!" shouted a voice from the trawler, and in a few minutes the German ship was brought up alongside the small boat.

be moving. Joe had a good long look at her, and then spoke to his father in a shaky voice.

"For goodness' sake have a care what you're doing, father," he said. "Yon's a mine-layer, or I'll eat my oilskins. Can you not see them things slung outboard against her bulwarks?"

George looked again, and ordered us all to keep our heads below the gunwale.

"Heaven send she doesn't see us," he whispered, "and gets away before daylight. If she knows we're watching, as like as not she'll run us down as soon as she has dropped her mines. It's a mercy we lowered the mast; but, even so, a coble's a fair-sized thing to see, and the moon's clearing."

We lay low and watched. The wind suddenly shifted a couple of points to the south, and that helped to beat down the worst of the sea; indeed, if it had not been for the trawler, George would have taken in the sea-anchor and hoisted the sail again; but there was no hope of escaping notice if we did that. We were about two hundred yards from the trawler's starboard quarter, when her crew suddenly became active. They rigged a long spar as a derrick from the mast (she had only one—forward of the funnel), and we could see them carefully lift one of the mines from its place, attach the sinker, and then lower the whole infernal apparatus into the sea; then she steamed forward a little and dropped another, and so things went on till she had got rid of her load—eight in all. By the time the last mine was laid she lay about a mile to the west of us, and we thought we were safe; but the sky showed only a few scurrying clouds, and the moon was shining like a big arc-lamp. Round came the trawler's head till it was pointing dead towards us. If she had not sighted us already, she was bound to do so within the next few minutes.

'No use trying to hide any longer," said George. "She's bound to see us in any case, and then we shall be captured, or more likely run down. Lend a hand, all of you, and we'll get the spare sail up; they shall have a run for their money, whatever they mean to do."

All hands set-to, and heaved the mast up in next to no time. George and Joe soon had the spare sail bent to the halyards, and Joe made the tack fast; while his father took the sheet and the tiller, and ordered Dick and myself to hoist away. As soon as the sail was up, George shouted to Joe to cut the sea-anchor adrift, and a few moments later we were away before the wind. It was still blowing very fresh, but we used the full sail without a reef and fairly rushed through the water, all four of us crowding to the stern to save her from running under.

As the sail went up, the trawler gave two toots of her whistle, and presently the smoke from her funnel doubled itself, and almost hid her from view as it rolled down wind towards us. Thicker and thicker it came, and we knew that she was gaining, though not very fast at first; but, alas! the wind decreased steadily, and after about an hour's chase she began to pick us up very quickly. George waited till there was a cloud over the moon, and then put the helm over, hauled in the sheet, and set the coble away on the port tack to the east-north-east, so far as we could judge; but when the moon cleared again we saw that the trawler had altered her course accordingly, and was steaming to head us off from the land.

"She's a funny trawler, is yon," said George. "Them Germans is up to all sorts of tricks, and they've engined the beast specially. I never see an honest trawler with speed like that. Stand by to wear ship."

He put the helm over, and presently we were off on the other tack, but the trawler was on the watch and came after us, and the wind was getting slacker every moment. In another half-hour she was close astern of us, and a voice hailed us through a speaking-trumpet, in good English but with an unmistakable German accent.

"Lower your sail," the man shouted, "or we'll sink you."

Dick, Joe, and I got the sail down, and the coble broached to. The trawler was brought skilfully alongside to the windward of us. A couple of deck hands, as they seemed to be, dropped into our boat with a rope and made us fast; while the skipper leant over the bulwarks and invited us to come aboard. This, so I judged by his voice, was the man who had hailed us, and he wasn't any ordinary skipper either; he wore oilskins and a sou'wester, but at any rate he spoke like a gentleman.

He looked like one too a few minutes later, when we saw more of him. With the help of a rope we scrambled up the side, and were at once ordered down to the cabin where there was a light burning. The ports and skylight were boarded up, and the place was stuffy, but tidy and well kept: there was a table fixed in the middle, lockers along each side, and a stove at one end, near the door leading to the

companion. The skipper took off his sou'wester and invited us to sit down on one of the lockers: he himself sat on the other, unstrapped the front of his oilskin coat, lighted a pipe, and rested his elbows on the table.

"Now, gentlemen," he said, "you had better give some account of yourselves. What are you doing so far out at sea in a small fishing boat at this time of night? Don't trouble to tell me that you were fishing: my men report that there is neither net nor line in the boat."

"Sir," said I to the skipper, "my brother and I are just schoolboys, home for the holidays, and fond of a sail. We hired the boat and the men, and we didn't intend to come farther than the Longstone, but the wind got up, and we were blown out to sea."

"Good," said he; "but why did you try to escape when we came to rescue you?"

This was a poser, and I didn't know how to answer him, but Dick, who is never wanting in cheek, did it for me.

"Because," he said, "because we saw that you were—setting lobster-pots, and we didn't want to interfere with them."

"So?" said the skipper. "You saw that much, did you? Well, this simplifies matters. I have it in my mind to throw you overboard to look for lobsters and lobster-pots."

'Then you'll be a pirate," said I desperately, 'and you'll be hanged in chains at Execution Dock."

I didn't know where Execution Dock was, but I had read about it, and thought it might impress him.

"So?" he said, again. "But who is to know what becomes of you? Your boat is drifting about the North Sea bottom upwards; you have been upset and drowned in the storm."

"But it will be piracy and murder all the same," said I, "and if you set us ashore, the Board of Trade will give you a gold watch or a pair of binoculars, besides what my father will pay."

"Bah!" he replied. "I am a lieutenant in the German Imperial Navy, and at war with England, and your Board of Trade, and your father too. And you—you are spies and can give information to the enemy. I am entitled to shoot you: you may die that way, if you prefer it to drowning."

"We're not spies," I answered, hotly, "and you know that well enough. It was only by accident that we saw you laying mines, and of course we tried to get away after that. We're prisoners of war, if you like, and we demand proper treatment."

"Yes, and something to eat," Dick added. "We haven't had anything but a biscuit since lunch."

The lieutenant burst out laughing, and I knew that things were going all right.

"Well," he said, "I will consent to shut my eyes to your misdoings; at least, I will not execute you by starvation. But I must take you with me to Wilhelmshaven, where you will be shut up in prison till the war is over. However, that will not be long, and, when it ends, you will be Germans, and perhaps midshipmen in the Imperial Navy. I shall be in command of a battleship then, and you shall serve under me."

"Sounds all right," said Dick, "but you've got to get to Wilhelmshaven first."

III

THE lieutenant laughed and went on deck. A minute or two later a sailor came below, and got us a cold meal from various lockers and cupboards, but he couldn't speak a word of English or understand a word of my German. However, he gave us lots to eat, including German sausage and funny bread with caraway seeds dotted about the top. One thing he did understand, and that was when I handed him a full glass of beer; he glanced up the companion and then tossed it off at a gulp.

It was nearly five o'clock in the morning by the cabin clock, but of course that was German time, and I couldn't remember how much ahead of ours; my watch had stopped, and Dick's, as usual, was out of action; nor could we see whether any signs of daylight had begun to appear. We sat in a row on the locker, and were just beginning to doze, when suddenly the lieutenant came clumping down into the cabin, apparently in a state of great excitement.

"I fear I must trouble you to shift your quarters, gentlemen," he said. "One of your meddlesome destroyers has appeared on the horizon and is heading towards us: we shall be stopped and examined, and I do not choose that you should be found on board. There is a lazarette under this cabin, where stores were kept when the boat was a trawler. You will oblige me by retiring there, and, remember! not a sound, or the armed guards I shall place over you will stab you in a moment."

He whistled, and two sailors came into the cabin. A mat was shifted, revealing a small

covered hatch close to the foot of the companion, and, when this was opened, we dropped down, one by one, into a low, dark place right in the stern of the ship. We could hear the tail-shaft humming under our feet, and the sides were the curved and sloping plates of the vessel's skin. The two sailors came down after us with a lantern, which they hung on a nail against the forward bulkhead, and then the hatch was closed. Dick and I tried to get our guards to talk, but they only grinned and showed us their bayonets; they had revolvers, too, slung on their belts, but it was cold steel that we had to face if we were to let the British Navy know that we wanted its help.

In the midst of the commotion the hatch above was opened, and three bluejackets jumped down into the lazarette.

It was clear that the lieutenant meant to disguise the character of his ship and himself. Probably he would hoist Dutch colours and pretend to be an innocent fishing vessel, but Dick and I made up our minds to spoil his little plot if we could. We knew that the odds were heavy against us, but this was a case where we might do some good, even if we were killed.

Suddenly we heard a gun, and then the trawler's engines stopped. The sea had gone down a good deal, and she only rolled a little as we waited for the boat that we knew must be coming from the destroyer. Presently we heard footsteps and voices in the cabin above us; the officer in charge of the search party had come

to examine the ship's papers, and I knew that it was now or never. Some sort of instinct made me feel in my coat pocket, and there I found an apple which I had forgotten. Turning my back on the sailors, who were watching us closely, I smuggled it into Dick's hand.

"You're a better shot than I am," I whispered. "When I give the word, let fly at the lantern, and then duck and go for their knees. Are you ready? Now!"

Dick swung round, and in an instant the apple crashed through the glass front of the lantern and put the light out, while we charged forward with our heads down. George and Joe backed us up nobly, though we hadn't been able to warn them of what to expect. The two sailors were taken absolutely by surprise, and one of them dropped his bayonet as I got him round the knees and brought him down like a threequarter close to the touch-line. The other man made vicious downward stabs, and I got one in the shoulder, but the wound wasn't bad enough to put my arm out of action, and I hardly felt it at the time. Luckily the fallen sailor took the rest, and before long Dick pulled the stabber off his feet, and George and Joe came tumbling on top of them both.

The noise, as you may imagine, was tremendous. From the first moment we yelled for all we were worth, but the wounded sailor bellowed louder than any of us. We heard a noise of men running down the companion, and a moment later the little hatch was opened, letting a flood of light (so it seemed after the darkness) pour down on us from above. Better still, three bluejackets dropped one after another into the lazarette, and soon sorted us out. The two sailors showed no more fight, and in a few minutes, with a heave from below and a hoist from above, we ascended to the cabin, where we found a British naval lieutenant covering the disguised German officer with his revolver.

"Jack Henshaw!" I exclaimed. "Glad to see you, Jack! You've come just in time to do us a good turn."

We had known Jack almost as long as we had known anyone, and a thorough good chap he was.

"By Jove!" he exclaimed, "it's Dick and Harry Shorewood! How on earth did you get yourselves here?"

"That's a story which must wait," said I. "For the present it's my duty to tell you that we've seen this vessel laying mines."

"Eight mines," said Dick. "But otherwise we've been well treated, and the sausage is first-rate. But look, Jack! Harry's wounded."

I had almost forgotten about the stab, but directly I was reminded of it, it began to hurt a bit. Jack Henshaw looked serious, and the German turned a bit pale, but I assured them both that it wasn't much more than a scratch.

"You'd better get aboard the *Lightsome* at once," said Jack, "and the skipper will fix you up in no time. I must stop here and go through the ship. You're a prisoner, *mein Herr*, and your ship's our prize."

"Good-bye, *mein Herr*," I said to the German. "We shan't be your midshipmen for a while yet."

"Little spoofers!" he said as he shook hands. "I wish I had drowned you, but, as I haven't, good-bye!"

We went on deck and found that it was early morning: the *Lightsome*, a long, black destroyer, was lying a little way off, with three four-inch guns trained on the trawler, and we were soon put on board, where we had almost as great a reception as if we had sunk a German cruiser. The captain dressed my wound, while the sub-lieutenant and the engineer-lieutenant-commander looked on and advised, and Dick gave them the outline of the story. George and Joe were sent to the men's quarters and feasted, but I was put to bed in the captain's own bunk, and Dick in Jack Henshaw's.

Some hours later we invaded the mess-room to demand breakfast, and found Jack Henshaw waiting to hear our story from our own mouths.

"I wish you were both in the Navy," he exclaimed, when he had heard us to the finish. "And, by George! there's a chance. We've spoken the commodore of our flotilla and given him your names, and they're sure to go on to the admiral. We're nearing the Tyne now, with all the Germans aboard, including your friend the lieutenant. Smithson and a prize crew are bringing the trawler after us, and it's all right about your people; we sent news of you by wireless as soon as you were asleep. Come on deck, if you've had enough to eat."

We went on deck, and there was Tynemouth Castle in front of us, only a couple of miles away. Oh, but it was good to see England again after so nearly making a journey to Germany, and the only thing that made us at all sorry was having to part company with Jack Henshaw and the crew of the *Lightsome*.

The Admiralty has given George Tuggal a new boat, and Joe has joined the Navy. Whether we shall have the same luck remains to be seen. If it comes off, I hope we shall be on a battleship where he's one of the lieutenants.

STRONG ARMS OF STEEL

The Story of the Crane and its Wonders, Told by

Harold J. Shepstone

A travelling crane with hinged jib, a type of weight-lifter much favoured in our great engineering yards. It is seen raising a load of 37½ tons at a radius of 125 feet.

IN our admiration of the great engineering wonders, such as massive buildings, great harbours, huge liners, and monster battleships, we are apt to overlook some of the equally ingenious and wonderful tools that have been specially devised to enable man to create them. Chief among these come the great cranes by the aid of which the buildings or ships were evolved.

Indeed, it is not going too far to say that were it not for these mighty weight-lifters the shipbuilder and engineer could not turn out such monster vessels as the *Aquitania* and battleships of the Dreadnought class. Nor could he, without the help of the crane, rear those wonderful edifices and defy the sea with his breakwaters and stout harbour walls built of concrete blocks weighing forty tons and more apiece. The modern engineer is enabled to accomplish all these marvels solely through his success in creating a mechanical weight-lifter that will, at his bidding, pick up any load he may desire, however heavy and awkward it may be, and place it in the desired position.

A few years ago cranes capable of lifting a weight of a hundred tons were regarded as wonderful pieces of machinery, unlikely to be eclipsed in the matter of weight-raising to any appreciable extent. The limit, it was thought, had been reached. But the continual increase in the size and dimensions of our liners and warships, and the heavy guns and mountings which the latter carry, made it necessary for the crane engineer to devise still more powerful weight-lifters, with the result that to-day we have cranes capable of handling loads up to no fewer than 250 tons. This enormous weight, too, is raised, swung into the desired position, and there lowered with the utmost ease. It is only when we ponder over the figure that we realise what

250 tons really represent. It is equal to the combined weight of a dozen ordinary suburban dwellings, to four of our standard express locomotives, and the tonnage of many of our large coasting vessels and pleasure yachts.

It is in the great shipbuilding yards where the largest of these cranes are to be found. Their work consists in lifting the heavy steel plates which form the sides of the great liners and also the ponderous machinery by which such vessels are propelled. In the latest liners, for instance, there are as many as forty and more boilers in the engine-room, each turning the scale at over a hundred tons. These have to be picked up by the crane at the quayside, raised some sixty feet into the air, swung out horizontally over the vessel for a distance of some forty feet, and then lowered seventy or eighty feet, until they finally find a bed in the lowest compartment of the ship.

On account of the narrow space through which boilers and the heavy and cumbersome machinery of a ship have to be lowered, every precaution has to be taken to guard against accident, as the least miscalculation or bungle would be a serious matter. To dump a heavy object down on to a ship in a hasty manner would probably cause damage to the decks which would take weeks to repair. While lowering a boiler weighing some forty tons into a ship at an American yard, some few months ago, something evidently went wrong with the crane. The wire ropes snapped and the boiler crashed down into the stokehold with such force that it tore a hole in the ship's bottom. Fortunately the men working in the vessel escaped, but the ship had to be sent into dry dock and have her plates overhauled, an operation which occupied several weeks.

The most powerful type of crane is that known as the revolving cantilever. These are the giants among weight-lifters. They themselves turn the scale at six hundred to one thousand tons, take a couple of years to

Cranes are of immense value to shipbuilders. The photograph shows one of these huge weight-lifters hoisting a submarine.

construct, and, with their electrical equipment, cost anywhere from £60,000 to £100,000, according to what is demanded of them. They are to be found at the great naval dockyards, the one at Devonport, of which we give an illustration, having a lifting capacity of 250 tons. It has, however, raised considerably more than this weight, and, at a push, is capable of tackling a load of three hundred tons. Indeed, it is the most powerful of weight-lifters, a triumph of British engineering, for it was turned out at Messrs. Cowan's famous crane works at Carlisle.

A giant among weight-lifters. The 250-ton revolving cantilever crane at the Devonport Dockyards.

It was designed to handle the heavy guns on our battleships, which have considerably increased in weight and size during the last few years. Guns alone now turn the scale at fifty to over a hundred and fifty tons. These heavy weights have to be lifted from the ground to a height of fifty or sixty feet, swung outwards a considerable distance, and then lowered into position on their selected battleships. Not only guns but their mountings, which are almost as heavy, have thus to be swung on board, and for this work the cantilever has been found most admirable.

Briefly, this particular type of crane consists of a revolving structure formed of two cantilevers mounted on a high tower. The cantilevers are of unequal length, the longer one carrying the travelling carriage, which hoists, lowers, and traverses the load, while the shorter cantilever carries the winding gear and ballast weight. As the cantilever, or projecting arm, can revolve round a complete circle, it means that the crane can pick up and deposit loads anywhere within that radius. Here it should be explained that the weight lifted is entirely governed by the radius; or, in other words, by the distance from the tower. The Devonport giant, for instance, can lift a load of 250 tons at a radius of one hundred feet, which is certainly a remarkable performance. At a distance of one hundred and fifty feet from the tower, however, it has a normal lifting capacity of just over one hundred tons, which is further reduced to fifty tons at a radius of one hundred and sixty feet.

At a certain dockyard, some little time ago, the authorities tried to lift a 60-ton gun by one of these cranes from a distance of one hundred and fifty feet, whereas the crane was only designed to carry that load at a radius of ninety feet. This resulted in the collapse of the weight-lifter and considerable damage to the warship lying alongside. The great cantilever arm of the crane buckled up as a result of the strain, and the whole mass fell with a crash on to the warship's deck, causing considerable havoc. Luckily the sailors working on the ship at the moment were able to obtain shelter in the nick of time.

The erection of one of these weight-lifters is

a no mean engineering feat in itself, and occupies anywhere from eighteen months to two years. The tower that carries the cantilever arm rises to a height of a hundred feet or more above the level of the quay, and is, perhaps, fifty feet square. The cantilevers which grace this latter structure measure, in the case of the bigger cranes, no fewer than 260 or 280 feet in length, and attain from thirty to thirty-six feet or more in breadth. From the quayside, therefore, to the top of the rail the structure may tower something like one hundred and thirty or more feet in height.

The revolving or cantilever part of the Devonport structure has a weight of no fewer than six-hundred tons, yet it is so evenly and delicately balanced that it can be made to swing in any desired direction by the simple operation of pulling over a lever—

As already stated, the winding-gear, as well as the other machinery used in the working of the crane, is stored in a special house in the shorter cantilever arm, while the crane is operated by a driver from a cabin fixed in the main tower some twenty-five feet or so above the ground level. Here are to be found a wonderful array of delicate instruments that inform the driver of the weight of the load, the exact height it is raised, and the radius at which it is being carried. Furthermore, alarm bells ring should an excessive load be carried, or the radius be exceeded. The drivers of these big cranes occupy a very responsible position, and have to watch very closely the behaviour of their colossal piece of machinery. They have to see that the load is lifted high enough to escape contact with any projections as a cumbersome article is swung over the ship's side, and then that

A monster crane at Vickers' shipbuilding yards, used for lifting heavy material on board warships.

the mechanism, of course, being electrically worked. Every operation of this giant piece of machinery is electrically controlled. From the carriage which runs along the overhanging arm depend no fewer than sixteen steel wire ropes, each 5½ins. in circumference, running through a block to which the load is attached. These ropes are sufficiently long to enable the block to be lowered fifty feet below the quay level. Each rope is coiled in one layer on a turned and grooved cast-iron barrel, 6ft. 6ins. in diameter by 12ft. long.

the utmost care is exercised in lowering it. Dropping a heavy weight too fast or in a jerky manner through a narrow hatchway may result in damage to a ship, not to mention injuries to the men working upon her.

In the great shipbuilding yards and also in the naval dockyards, there are often more ships waiting to be fitted out than can conveniently lie alongside the quays. In order to expedite work upon such craft the engineer has devised the floating crane, and

some of these are among the wonders of the engineering world. At the famous shipbuilding yards at Belfast there is a floater which may often have been seen placing 100-ton boilers on board big liners. This giant has a lifting capacity of two hundred tons. Naturally it is not always that such heavy loads as this have to be handled, so the crane is equipped with two other pulleys by which weights of fifty tons and five tons respectively can be raised. The speed, too, at which these pulleys can be operated may be varied to suit the convenience of the work in hand.

As to the crane itself, it consists of a steel tower with a hinged jib, mounted on a large pontoon which can be towed alongside a ship. One of its principal features is that it has a big outreach, and will lift to a great height; for instance, a 50-ton load can be lifted almost one hundred and fifty feet at a distance of one hundred feet from the centre of the pontoon. The latter is certainly a no mean raft seeing that it is 150ft. long, 86ft. wide, and some 13ft. deep. The whole apparatus is under the control of one man in the cabin perched some twenty-five feet above the deck, and it is needless to add that the motive power is electricity. This wonderful floater cost £35,000, but more powerful ones still are to be found in our great naval dockyards, among them being one upon which £85,000 has been expended. This latter is capable of handling the heaviest of guns.

At the Navy Yard at Brooklyn there is a very ingenious steam floating crane. It is what may be termed a double horizontal crane, for loads can be raised at either end of its long steel arm, or they may both be employed together. It means this: that it can be floated alongside a battleship, a damaged gun lifted out with one arm, and then, by turning the crane round, another gun dropped into its place. This novel floater cost £20,000 to build, and three years were spent in its erection.

Our description of these giant weight-lifters would not be complete without a reference to the goliath, which is virtually a kind of travelling bridge running on rails, from which depends the block by which loads are raised and lowered. Not so very long ago weights of ten tons were considered heavy for goliaths, but they are now frequently made up to forty, fifty, and even a hundred tons capacity. The occasion for this development lies in the ever-increasing use of concrete for the blocks of breakwaters, piers, and other harbour work generally; in the demands of stone quarries, of bridge builders, the requirements of steel works for the transportation of ingots, and in the proving grounds of gun manufacturers. It may be worked either by steam or electricity, the latter power being employed as a rule if heavy weights are to be lifted.

In building the famous harbour at Dover, erected as a refuge for our fleet in time of war, 60-ton goliath cranes, with a span of a hundred feet, were employed. These monsters placed on the ocean bed some seventy thousand huge concrete blocks. The larger ones measured nearly fifteen feet in length, 7½ feet in width, and 6 feet in depth, turning the scale at forty-two tons apiece. Perhaps we get a better idea of what these cranes were capable of accomplishing when it is stated that if one were set up on its staging in Palace Yard, Westminster, it could lift up Big Ben, with all its chimes, from the ground and place it on top of the clock tower. When it is remembered that these cranes weigh something like three hundred and fifty to four hundred tons one would never dream it would be possible to overthrow them, yet in the erection of the breakwater at Vera Cruz, in Mexico, one was actually carried away in a storm. Even at Dover these mighty weight-lifters had to be lashed with heavy steel chains during severe storms to prevent their being washed off the stagings.

Indeed, when we point with pride to our huge liners and our monster battleships that make Great Britain the mistress of the seas, and marvel at the great harbour man has built wherein these ships may seek refuge in times of stress, we must not forget that these vessels and these havens could not have been created without the help of the giant weight-lifters.

FLAMEHAIR THE SKALD

A Story of the Days when the Norsemen ruled the Seas

By H. BEDFORD JONES ◈ Illustrated by T. Heath Robinson

CHAPTER XXI

HOW ALFGAR MET KING MAGNUS

ALFGAR woke to find himself lying in a bunk, while Atli Farseer and the others were crowded about the table. Atli was just concluding the tale of their long trip, and, as Alfgar swung his legs over the side of the bunk and stepped up to the table, Harald turned to him with flashing eyes.

"Is this true, Flamehair?"

Swiftly Alfgar told his story, and, when he finished the recital, there was dead silence, broken a moment later as Harald's fist crashed down upon the table.

"By my sword!" thundered the infuriated chieftain. "Go rouse the men, Haldor! We will set upon Svein in his camp this night, and——"

"Peace!" interrupted Haldor, quickly. "You have given an oath to Svein, Harald, and it will not do to break it thus hastily. His treachery is not known as yet, remember, to all men. Besides," he added, drily, "there are many more men in Svein's camp than we have here, for most of ours are abroad plundering."

Harald sank back, realising the force of this argument.

"You are right," he said, bitterly, plucking at his sword. "What is your rede, friends? We must even play the game with Svein's own weapons."

"Aye," agreed Eadgar, thoughtfully, "that is sooth. Magnus is no doubt on his way south to meet us. If he comes upon us it would be sore dishonour to desert Svein, no matter what the cause. If only your letter had reached him!"

"Where a letter has failed a messenger might succeed," put in Haldor, curtly: Harald gazed at him keenly.

"A messenger? How? We are still far from Norway."

"Aye," returned Haldor, stoutly. "Here we are at Sealand, but in a day or two we go on to Roskild, where Svein will set up his standard. You are absolved from your oath, for Jarl Flamehair has it out of the king's own mouth that he killed Sigurd Thick. Since Flamehair has begun the task, let him finish it. Keep him hid aboard here till we reach Roskild, then send him north in a ship, privily, to see Magnus."

"A good rede!" exclaimed Harald, turning to Alfgar. "Stay, jarl—are you hurt? We were so wrapped up in the news you bore that we gave small heed to you or your fainting!"

"No," smiled Alfgar, quickly. "I was but a trifle exhausted, and my knees were weak with much sitting in the small boat. I'm all right now. Yes, give me the errand, Harald!"

"But we don't know where Magnus is," said Eadgar, doubtfully. "In any case, the thing would have to be done speedily, and a head wind might drive the ship far off her course."

"No fear of that," broke in Atli. "Give us a short rest, and we can take that small boat against any wind. I am from Thiotta in the north, and——"

"Nay," and Harald bent a frown on him. "I knew not that there was wizardry in this affair, Atli Farseer! Men who follow the White Christ must needs have little dealing with wizards."

"There is none, Harald," laughed Alfgar at these words. "I may not tell you what it is, but I give you my word that there is no magic in it."

Harald's brow cleared. "Very well, jarl—so be it. You want that particular boat, eh? Easy enough. Haldor, caution the guard on watch that they must say nothing of Alfgar

and Atli under peril of death. You must both remain here in the cabin, lest the men fall to talking, and Svein hear of your arrival.

"Now for your errand. Listen, Atli, for if anything happens to Jarl Alfgar you must fulfil it. I will give you no letters, but this arm-ring of mine which you bore once before, Flamehair. The runes will be enough proof of your authority to speak, for the ring belonged to King Olaf, the father of Magnus, and he will know it. Tell him the story and urge upon him my rightful claim to half the throne, but say that I would not bear bane-spear against him willingly. Say, moreover, that we shall divide our loose wealth equally."

Harald smiled at the protests that went up at this statement.

"Why not?" he asked. "The gold does me no good, and there is more to be had. By the way, Eadgar, see that the fishing-boat is cared for; we can trail her after our ship well enough."

Atli went out with Eadgar, leaving Alfgar and Harald alone. Hardrede rose and placed his hands on the shoulders of the Saxon, looking him in the eye.

"Think not, jarl, that you shall not be rewarded most fittingly for these your services. When I am king, then you shall be my own jarl instead of Jarisleif's——"

Sudden tears leaped to Alfgar's eyes, and he flung the hands of Harald from him roughly.

"I want not your jarlship!" he cried, bitterly. "If you think that I have served you and loved you for rewards, then it is time I found some other master who would think better of me, Harald Hardrede! I have no——"

But, before he could say more, Harald, with a great laugh of joy, caught him in an iron grip and held him close.

"Oh, would that you were my own son!" he cried, a great heart-longing in his voice, and Alfgar's heart went out to him at the cry. "My skald, you might have been as great a warrior as I, had not your mind ever been held to peace and gentleness. For the boldness in your heart I love you, Flamehair; no man in all the host would have dared say those words to Harald, and much loneliness has made me hard of redes indeed. Doubt me not, my son—doubt me not! You of all men are my truest friend."

"I was hasty, Harald," returned Alfgar, humbly, "and I ask your pardon. I do not doubt you; but I pray you make me not your jarl—let me have no other title than your friend, and I am content."

"Here is my handsel on it," smiled Harald, and for a moment they stood hand in hand.

Then swiftly Harald turned away and drew off his arm-ring. Silently the young jarl put it on, and a moment later the others returned, their errands done.

The next day the host left Sealand, and a day later King Svein set up his standard at Roskild. Here the host was to tarry until more men and ships came in, and until they had more sure news of the whereabouts of Magnus, who was known to be on his way south to meet them. Harald had left last of all, and when he came to Roskild he anchored his ships on the outer edge of the fleet, where they might up-sail and away at a minute's notice if need be.

That night the fishing boat was brought alongside and provided with a good store of food and water, and Alfgar and Atli, thoroughly rested and refreshed, left their hiding after dark and lowered themselves into her. Harald leaned over the rail above them, with a few parting words of instruction.

"Make all speed!" he concluded. "Harald and, perchance, Norway are in your hands, my friends; fail them not!"

"We will not, Harald," answered Alfgar as he ran up the sail and Atli jumped to the tiller. "Farewell!"

The little boat darted away, for there was a good wind. But, dark as it was, she received a hail in passing a Swedish ship, and to his dismay Alfgar recognised the voice of King Svein himself!

"Do you reply, Atli," he said hurriedly. "He knows my voice."

"We are fishermen," shouted Atli, "returning to the other side of the island."

"Come aboard here," came Svein's angry voice, but Atli only laughed grimly and held on. Then the wind bore to them a few scattered words as the ships behind were lost in the night.

"After them . . . . see who . . . . kill . . . ."

"Did you hear that?" asked Alfgar. Atli nodded, peering ahead.

"Let the dogs bark!" he cried, exultantly. "We have the open sea before us, Flamehair, and speedy will be the ship that catches us now!"

Out from the shelter of the bay they swept, and, as Atli had predicted earlier in the evening, there was a stiff gale blowing. To reach Norway, they had to head to the north-west, and it was indeed a hard voyage for so small a boat, even in good weather. The night was a wild one, and frequent squalls caught them, so that all the skill of the old helmsman was needed. All at once Alfgar looked back, and gave a cry; for by a flash of lightning he had seen a large sail behind.

Atli had seen it also. "Svein is taking no chances," he said. "That was what the words meant that we heard faintly. He has sent a dragon in pursuit of us, and it will go hard if we are taken. However, she cannot overtake us easily."

Suddenly Alfgar gave a cry, for a flash of lightning revealed the sail of a pursuing ship

Svein's dragon was faster than Atli thought, however. Slowly and steadily she drew up on the fishing boat, and there was no doubt that they were followed. Their sail could easily be made out, for the lightning flashed continuously, and, despite the frequent squalls of rain, the pursuers continued to gain on them.

More than once Atli shifted his helm, but the dragon was close upon them when there came a sudden, furious burst of wind and rain that lasted for nearly five minutes. So terrific was it that Atli was hard put to it to keep the boat erect, and when it cleared off the ship had vanished. They had no time to wonder, Alfgar keeping busy baling with his helm, but they concluded that she had either run back for shelter or had gone down in that sudden squall.

After three hours the gale blew over and settled into a steady wind. Rejoicing over their narrow escape, they held northward until the dawn, then turned towards the northwest. All day they sailed, and, by the evening, red and purple in the setting sun, the cliffs of Norway appeared far ahead. Not knowing where King Magnus was, they drew into the land, and for that night lay in a narrow bay, taking up their course again in the morning.

All that day they saw no sign of ships. At evening they drew in to the shore again, fearing they might pass the fleet by night. On the third morning they came to a long headland. As they swept around the point, Alfgar uttered a gasp of surprise. There, spread out before them, lay a multitude of ships, gay with bright-hued sails, gilded prows, and glittering shields, while on the shore was a great camp that glittered with steel.

"No doubt of where we are now," remarked Atli, grimly, heading in. "I have done my work, Flamehair; may the gods help you in yours likewise!"

Alfgar smiled, but made no reply. As they reached the ships the Norsemen paid them no heed, for many such fishing-craft were in the harbour. Not until Alfgar hailed the nearest

ship and asked for the king, did they arouse any comment. Then a large, well-made man with bright hair sprang on the bulwarks of a ship and hailed them.

"Who are you that ask for King Magnus?"

"Messengers from Harald Sigurdson," replied Alfgar. Atli smiled grimly at the uproar created by the words. Men sprang to the sides of every ship, while those on shore lined the beach. Only the bright-haired man seemed unmoved.

"If you jest it will go hard with you. Come aboard; this ship is the king's."

So, lowering the heavy sail, Atli and Alfgar rowed to the side of the ship and sprang on deck. Before them stood their questioner, and by the richness of his armour and weapons they knew that he was some great man of the king's.

"And now, what message do you bear from Harald?" he asked, looking them over keenly and speaking eagerly.

"That is not for you to know," rejoined Alfgar, quietly. "I speak to none save King Magnus himself. Tell him that Jarl Alfgar is here, from his uncle Harald."

At the words, an angry growl rose from the warriors clustering about the deck, but the leader quelled it with a glance.

"Like master, like man," he quoted, not unkindly, a humorous twinkle in his eyes. Alfgar liked him at first sight and wondered who he might be. "Have you proof of your message, or that Harald sent you?"

"That I have," answered Alfgar. "That also is for the king's eye and for none other's. Now lead me to him quickly, else we will return as we came."

"Truly, you speak as Harald himself might," laughed the other. A smothered laugh ran around the men. Atli touched Alfgar with his foot, and the Saxon wondered the more; a flush rose to his cheeks as he imagined he was being made sport of, and he took a quick step forward. But, before he could speak, the Norseman held out his hand quietly.

"Give me the message, Jarl Alfgar. I am Magnus Haraldson."

CHAPTER XXII

THE SUNDERING OF THE HOST

THEN it all came upon Alfgar suddenly, and he flushed again from shame, as he handed over the arm-ring. Magnus looked at it eagerly, read the runes, and glanced up.

"Come with me to my cabin, jarl."

Alfgar followed as he led the way through the warriors, and, once inside the cabin, Magnus spoke excitedly.

"Now haste and give me your message. Where is Harald?"

So Alfgar poured out all his tale, telling of the great force that was being gathered by King Svein, and of Harald's desire that a civil war should not disrupt Norway. He told of Svein's plotting and of the killing of Sigurd Thick, at which Magnus gave an angry exclamation.

"Just like Svein! Had I received that letter—but go on."

"Your father, King Olaf," concluded Alfgar, "promised Harald a share of the kingdom before he fell at Stiklestad. This was an open promise, and this promise Harald calls upon you to fulfil. If you will do so, Harald will leave Svein and join you here at once. Further, he offers to share with you all his wealth, which is great."

Magnus remained plunged in thought, then looked up.

"Leave me and refresh yourselves. I will take counsel, and before noon will give you an answer."

Alfgar and Atli went on deck, where they were immediately surrounded by a curious throng who brought them food and drink. All were anxious to hear of the famous Hardrede, and Alfgar and Atli satisfied their curiosity as well as might be, while waiting. Great satisfaction was evident among the men on hearing that Harald wished peace. When Magnus summoned them to the cabin, they found it full of chiefs, called from the other ships and the camp.

"One of my ships will take you back to Denmark," began the king, "and you can then rejoin Harald in a small boat. Tell him I have decided that his claim is a just one, and that if he will hasten to me here we can then agree upon a settlement as he wishes. If we come to no agreement, he shall go his ways in peace. It is my word that we shall rule Norway together in peace, and that when one of us dies the other shall take his kingship. As to Denmark, that I have won for myself, and that land is naught of his."

Overjoyed, Alfgar dropped to one knee and kissed the king's hand—a custom little seen in the rough north.

"Here is a gift for you," continued Magnus, handing Alfgar a rich sword and Atli a ring byrnie of the best. "Let these be a token to Harald that you have spoken with me. Now make all haste to him, and God speed your journey!"

Much impressed with the dignity, straightforwardness, and kingly manner of Magnus, Alfgar and Atli went aboard the ship furnished them. Their return trip was not so long, for they sailed under both oars and sail, and made all haste. Two nights later they were outside the bay of Roskild.

Dropping into a small skiff, they entered the fleet without discovery, and soon gained Harald's ship. With a muttered word to the guard, Alfgar went over the rail; as he did so his uncle gripped him.

"Careful! Svein is in the cabin with Harald, and their talk is rising high. Hist!"

Standing still, in dense shadow, Alfgar could make out the voices of the two chiefs, and suddenly that of Svein sounded angrily.

"Folk say, Harald, that you only hold to your covenants while they seem to drag your own case forward!"

"You will know of fewer broken oaths of mine," answered the voice of Harald, "than King Magnus will know broken oaths of yours!"

A moment later Svein left the cabin angrily, and, without a look around him, went over the side to his boat. Alfgar instantly entered the cabin and was greeted with a cry of joy.

"Well, jarl! And have you accomplished your errand so quickly? We had not looked for you before another three or four days!"

Harald's face lit up when he heard Alfgar's brief summary of the words of Magnus.

"Then all is well, Flamehair! And of the journey itself—did you have any misadventures?"

"At the start, yes," answered Alfgar, with a smile. He told of the ship that had pursued them, and as he did so the other chiefs entered the cabin, and stood around listening.

"I had hard words with Svein but now," said Harald, thoughtfully. "My mind misgives me that he is plotting somewhat of evil against me. He seemed much wroth at my plain speech——"

"It would be an easy matter," broke in Haldor, gruffly, "for a man to slip overside and into your cabin here, Harald!"

Hardrede started. "Flamehair," he said, "do you sleep at the foot of my bed to-night. In my place I will put a block of wood and see what befalls. In the morning we will set sail."

So it was arranged, and when Alfgar had once more told his story, this time with more detail, the others left the cabin and he flung himself down. He was in sore need of rest, and fell asleep without delay.

A slight noise aroused him, and as he opened his eyes he saw the door standing open and moonlight streaming into the cabin. With a sudden start he remembered the words of Haldor, and lay quietly, his hand on his sword. Then came a swish, followed by a dull thud. Instantly Alfgar was on his feet, his sword bared, and he flung himself against a dark figure that darted into the moonlight.

As he did so, the face of the intruder came into the light. Alfgar gave a startled cry, for the face was the face of Svein Arnison, whom he had last seen far away, in the room in the old Gothic castle where Hrolf had breathed his last! Instinctively he sprang back, blocking the way to the deck.

As he did so there came a shout from above, and a snarl of rage from Svein. A sword flashed out, and the next moment Alfgar was attacked desperately as Svein strove to cut his way to freedom. There came a rush of feet from the decks, but now his surprise was over.

"Traitor!" he cried. "This time you will not escape!"

The words drew a scornful laugh from Svein, who pressed Alfgar hard. But the Saxon was no longer the mere stripling who had opposed him in that fight in the dark; they were in full moonlight now, and even without his shield Alfgar had no fear of the great sword that Svein poised and swung so lightly.

Back and forth they struggled, steel clashing on steel, while above them formed a ring of faces and the flare of torches cast a ruddy light on the conflict. Once a savage swing caught Alfgar's shoulder, but the byrnie held and Svein barely escaped the return thrust. Alfgar was fighting freely and easily now, and from the men about the hatchway came shouts of encouragement.

The end came swiftly. Back and farther back Alfgar drove the traitor and would-be assassin, until at length Svein had his back against the wall. He swung savagely and downright, but ever Alfgar parried his thrusts and caught the great sword on his own blade turning it aside. Of a sudden Svein overreached himself; abandoning the downright edge swing, Alfgar gave one straight thrust of his weapon, and Svein dropped to the deck.

'Well fought!" came a cry from Harald, as the chief leaped down. The men poured after him with lights and entered the cabin. There, deep buried in the log of wood, stood a war axe!

Harald turned to the chiefs with a deep oath. "Out oars and away! Hew a passage!" But this was not necessary. The ships of Harald left the harbour quietly, without opposition by Svein, and by morning they were well on their way. Under oars and sail they made rapid progress, and at length arrived without incident at the fleet of Magnus. On the way Alfgar saw Sigrid for the first time for months, and they had many long talks about old times and old friends, sitting on the sunny forecastle.

King Magnus welcomed Harald by messenger, bidding him come ashore with the Varangars to a feast in a great tent set up in the camp. Harald's ships were run up on the beach, and Harald set foot on Norse soil for the first time in many long years.

Alfgar, as they followed the messenger to the camp, could scarcely believe that so many

and so great events had happened in such a short time, and that he had had such a large part in them himself. Around them the men of Magnus were cheering the magnificent appearance of Harald and his chosen men as they marched through the camp; then they entered the banquet-tent, and the two leaders met.

As Harald and Magnus smilingly clasped hands, a tremendous shout of joy rolled up from the assembled men, spread to the camp and on to the fleet until the shout was drowned in the blare of horns. For a long time Magnus and Harald talked, avoiding the matter of kingship, until all the men had feasted. Then a file of men entered, bearing burdens.

"These be gifts to your men from me," said King Magnus. To each of Harald's men were given gold, weapons, clothing—whatever they wished, and Alfgar wondered at the generosity of the Norse ruler. Suddenly Magnus arose, a reed in each hand, and stood before Harald.

"Which of these two wands will you choose as my gift?" he smiled.

"The one nearest me," answered Harald. Alfgar wondered what this meant, until Magnus spoke again.

"With this reed I give you half Norway realm, with all dues and dominion therein. You shall be king rightfully as I, but I shall have precedence while I live. This is but my due, for I have made you such a man as I thought none should ever be in Norway while I lived."

Harald thanked him well for this honour, and soon returned to his ships, for it was evening. There was great celebration both on shore and in the fleets that night, and next day King Magnus summoned all his host to a Thing. When the Thing was set, he made known to all that Harald was now king of half the realm. One of his great men, Thorir of Steig, then gave Harald the king's name, and it was approved with right good will. Harald Sigurdson was now king in sooth—and the ambition that began in far-off Byzantium was at last fulfilled!

Then Harald beckoned to Haldor, whispered in his ear, and the man left the assembly. The two kings were talking earnestly when he returned at the head of men who carried chests and boxes.

"What means this?" asked Magnus, surprised.

Harald smiled. "Seeing you have been so generous with your kingship, Magnus, it behoves me to be equally so with my wealth. Men, place all in two piles."

So it was done, and the great heaps of gold and silver were placed in two portions, one beside Magnus and the other beside Harald. When all was done, there remained a great lump of solid gold, melted down when some palace was burned, and carried off later. Taking this in both hands, Harald addressed Magnus.

"How shall we divide this lump?"

"I know not," smiled the other, shaking his head. "I have not gold enough to buy the half of it!"

But Harald turned and cried eagerly:—

"Alfgar! Jarl Alfgar! Take this as a free gift from us both!"

Alfgar, confused, came forward, but refused to take the ingot. At last Magnus added his urging to that of Harald, and so in the end Alfgar gave way, thanking the kings with a full heart, for the gift was a princely one. Then King Magnus took Alfgar's hand.

"Jarl Flamehair"—he smiled at the nickname—"ask of me what you will, and I swear that I will give it you. It is your doing that we met in peace, and for this I would give you a reward, that men may not deem Magnus less generous than Harald!"

A shout pealed up from the host, and Alfgar had a sudden idea. With a smile at Harald, he met the eye of King Magnus and replied:—

"There is but one thing I desire, Magnus. This is, that you use your good offices in my behalf with King Harald yonder."

"Why, what mean you?" exclaimed Harald.

Still addressing Magnus, Alfgar went on:—

"There is one thing in Harald's hands that I crave, and it is in his giving alone, King Magnus. If he will grant it me, I want no more."

"What is this thing, Harald?" asked Magnus. Hardrede stared at his jarl, perplexed.

"Nay, I know not," he answered. "But whatever it is, I grant it you freely. Now name it, Flamehair!"

"It is the hand of the lady Sigrid," and Alfgar flushed deeply at the roar of laughter and cheers that went up from the host as Harald gripped his hand heartily.

CHAPTER XXIII

HARALD'S LAST FIGHT

IT was very late in summer when these things befell. Before winter set in the two kings went north to Nidaros, the capital built by King Olaf Tryggvison, and there Harald received recognition from all the land as king. Meanwhile, King Svein led his expedition on to Denmark and that winter brought the land under him, Magnus being too busy to gather a host.

That same autumn word came to them that amazed Jarl Alfgar and Sigrid. It was said that a messenger had reached England, bringing letters from Olaf Tryggvison, and bearing

news of his death. Whether this messenger was Basil of the Errand or not, Alfgar never learned but he and Sigrid concluded that as Basil was the only messenger, he must have finally arrived at the end of his journey.

At Yuletide Alfgar and Sigrid were married in Clement's Church at Nidaros. The marriage was no surprise to Harald's men, and indeed the request made by Alfgar at the meeting of the kings had been long expected. All men knew the story of the two and their adventures, and it was deemed very fitting that they should be wedded in the end.

Hardrede bestowed lands in the south of Norway on Alfgar as a wedding gift, and thither the young jarl took his bride. With them went Eadgar, who in the following spring took ship and visited England, thinking to settle down there. But he found things not to his liking, and returned sadly to his nephew's stead. Alfgar had long since given up all idea of returning home. His friends were all here in Norway, he knew no one in England, and the tidings of King Edward's weak rule brought by Eadgar made him well content to remain in the north.

He accompanied King Harald, after the death of Magnus, in the wars against Svein of Denmark, but seldom stayed long at the court. Each winter, however, Harald came south and remained at Alfgar's stead for a month, and as the years drew on the two grew ever closer together.

Then came the eventful tidings of the death of Edward of England. Soon after this Alfgar was with Harald, in the Wick of Norway, when a stranger accompanied by a few men came to the king. Alfgar knew the man for

A snarl of rage broke from Svein, and his sword flashed out, but Alfgar was ready. "Traitor!" he cried. "This time you shall not escape!"

a Saxon at once, and so indeed it proved, for he was no other than Jarl Tosti, the brother of the new Saxon king Harald Godwinson.

Tosti urged on Harald his claim to the English throne, for by the compact made by King Magnus with King Hordaknut years before, by which Hordaknut's realms were to go to Magnus, the Norse kings still held title to England. Alfgar saw the way things were tending, and fought hard against it, but to no avail. In the end the smooth flatteries of Tosti availed, and King Harald sent out a war-muster calling half of Norway's fighting men together. That winter Ulf the Red, the old Icelander, who had been made marshal by Harald, died.

Sorrowfully enough, Alfgar went with his men and ships to join the host of the king at the Solund Isles. There were near two hundred ships in the fleet, and men said that never had so great a host been gathered in Norway before.

"I will bear no arms against my own people," said Alfgar to the king, as they stood together on the royal ship. "Yet will I go with you and if you conquer the land, Harald, it will be my work to make things go as well as may be between you and the Saxons."

"I would not have you bear bane-spear against your own folk," said Harald, kindly. "Bide you with me, Flamehair, and still give me your rede, for since I have promised Jarl Tosti to help him against his own brother, that promise I will keep, though methinks it will go hard with us or ever the realm of England falls to my hand."

So the fleet fared west, and came to the Orkneys, then part of Norway. There the Orkney jarls, Paul and Erland, joined Harald with a mighty host, and all sailed south past Scotland. At Scarborough they landed and won the city, then continued down to York.

Here the Saxon king's brothers, jarls Morcar and Walthiof, met Harald with a great army, but Harald's battle craft had not deserted him, and the upshot of that battle was that Jarl Morcar fell and the English host was routed. Shortly after, as the army began the siege of York, Jarl Tosti joined them from Flanders with many men. He bore the news that William of Normandy had set out to conquer England also, and Alfgar wondered drearily how it would all come out.

York was a strong city, however, and Harald could do but little against it. The fleet was brought up to Stamford Bridge, and here the townfolk made a truce with the king. It was arranged that on the Monday following a Thing would be held outside the town, to which Harald and his men should come in peace, and there the dominion would be given him, with the king's name of England.

That Saturday, Alfgar, without weapons, rode across the country with some of his men, for he longed to see his birthplace again. He visited the monastery, which had been rebuilt, but none there knew him, and sadly enough he returned towards York. It had been a goodly journey, and he did not reach the city until late Sunday evening. Stating that he was a Saxon, which his looks and tongue bore out, he entered the city.

Then, to his amazement, Jarl Alfgar found that an hour before King Harald Godwinson, with all his host, had entered the city secretly and was making ready to assault Harald Hardrede, unsuspecting. Soon after Alfgar's entrance the gates were closed and guarded; the Norse host was at Stamford Bridge with the ships, and in no way could Alfgar leave the city to warn his master. In vain he tried, and at length gave up in despair.

In the morning he joined some of the Saxon troops, who were laying their ambush for King Harald, and left. Parting with the men, he whirled his horse and at a mad gallop dashed for the fleet; but he was too late. Within a mile of the city he met Harald and all his men. They had left their byrnies and most of their weapons behind, and had no thought of battle.

"Hold, Harald!" shouted Alfgar, leaping from the saddle as the king drew rein. "Treachery! Harald Godwinson waits to lay his host on us!" And therewith he told the news. But, despite his agonised appeals, Harald refused to believe that it could be true.

"King Harald may be there," he said, "but he is no traitor! Yet will I send to the ships, bidding the men there bring up our weapons and armour. Never will King Harald of Norway flee!"

The messengers were sent off in haste, but, as Alfgar rode along at Harald's side, he knew that they would be of no use. A few moments later the English host came in sight, and for the first time Harald's confidence gave way. He arrayed the men with him in a wide circle, shield to shield, their spears planted in the ground. Before the English army rode out a score of men in full armour, and came near the Norse line while one of them shouted out a message:—

"Jarl Tosti, Harald thy brother giveth thee peace and one-third of his realm if thou wilt make peace with him."

Tosti, beside Alfgar and Harald, made quick answer:—

"That is somewhat late in coming! I will accept the proffer; but what shall be given King Harald Sigurdson for his toil?"

'Seven foot's room, to wit," returned the Saxon, "or so much more as he is higher than other men!"

Tosti laughed scornfully. "Return now and make ready for battle, if ye think to kill

us here treacherously. Never will Jarl Tosti desert his friends; rather shall we all take one rede, to die with honour or win all England by victory."

The English wheeled their horses and returned. King Harald asked Tosti who the man was that had borne the message, and drily enough the jarl replied that it was King Harald Godwinson himself!"

"Had I known that," returned Harald, "he would never have returned to his own men alive."

"So I thought," laughed Tosti, and for the first time Alfgar felt a gleam of admiration for the man. "But I would rather that he should give me my bane here than that I should bear death to him, for he is my own brother after all."

"Oh, it is just as well," laughed Harald. "He was a little man, but stood right stiff in the stirrup. He will be hard to conquer."

Alfgar stood in the centre of the shield-ring, beside Harald's banner, for still he would not bear weapons against Englishmen, and the king would not press him to do so. The Norsemen were surrounded, and for a time managed to hold their own despite the lack of weapons and armour. So stoutly did they fight that the Saxons began to give ground, and, forgetting their orders, the Norsemen raised a shout and broke their array.

This was their undoing. In vain Harald and Alfgar shouted to them to hold firm until the army arrived from the ships; in vain Harald leaped out into the thick of the fight and drove the Saxons before him. Suddenly, Alfgar saw the armourless king throw up his arms and fall. With a sob of rage and anguish, Alfgar picked up an axe and ran to his side. It was of no use; an arrow had pierced Harald's throat, and the Norse king breathed out his life in Alfgar's arms.

Then, for the first time, Alfgar was filled with mad fury. Whirling his axe aloft, he led the shattered Norsemen around Harald's banner, and here Jarl Tosti joined them. Barely fifty men remained out of all who had gone to the Thing with Harald that morning, but so stoutly and so fiercely did these fifty armourless men fight that the English perforce were driven back.

Then the Saxon king again offered them life, and peace to Tosti; but with one accord they chose to die rather than to yield, pointing to the body of Harald and cursing the Saxons as traitors to their oaths. At this the battle joined again, but just in time Eystein Heathcock arrived with the host, coming at a dead run. Finding they were too late, and that Harald had fallen, they fell on the English like madmen.

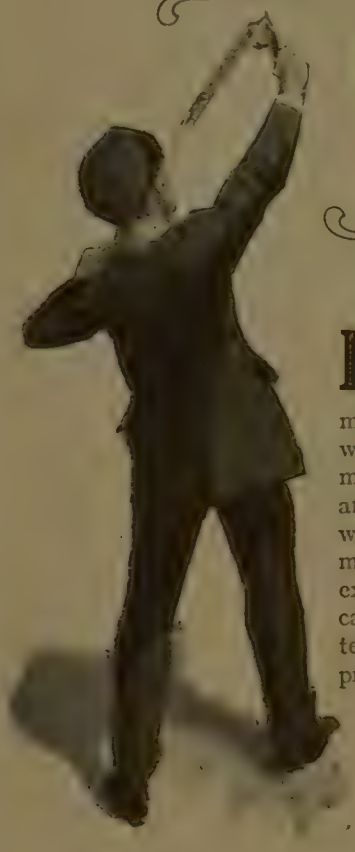
But Alfgar did not join them. With a few of his men he drew the body of King Harald out of the fray. As he did so the mad onrush of the half-frenzied Norsemen was checked and broken, for the Vikings sought only vengeance for their king and were careless of their lives. The Saxons burst through them, and Alfgar hastily drew aside with his men.

"Come, men," he said, sadly, "we are utterly defeated and cut off from the ships. Let us go to a monastery I wot of, and there will the king's body be kept until we can get ships home."

So this was the ending of that great array and of Norway's greatest king. All the noblemen of Norway fell in that desperate battle, save Jarl Alfgar and one or two who had remained at the ships. It was the most terrible defeat the Norsemen ever received, and stung all the more bitterly because it came through treachery.

Alfgar was kindly received at the monastery, and stayed there until news came of the Battle of Senlac and the death of Harald Godwinson. Soon after came men of William the Conqueror, spreading over the land, and these gave ready safe conduct to Alfgar to fare to Norway with the body of his loved king.

So Alfgar came home again, and King Harald was buried in his own new Marychurch at Nidaros. And ever after that Alfgar dwelt quietly on his stead, going no more to war, while he made songs for all who came, and listened to Sigrid telling the children wondrous tales of Flamehair the Skald.



HOME DEFENCE

An Exciting Adventure in which a Catapult plays a part

By RICHARD BIRD Illustrated by T. M. R. Whitwell

I

IT was three days before the end of the Christmas term. Dipcote was in a state of mingled exaltation and soberness. Joy was present in full measure, for the exams were practically over; a chastened mood was present, too, for, in the roll of honour—the list of Britain's dead—had appeared the names of many of Dipcote's best. The old school had worthily maintained tradition in giving her share and more to the blood-stained fields of France and Belgium. Soberness, a proud grief, was Dipcote's portion, especially among the older boys and masters. But among the juniors it was only natural that joy should be predominant. And of these not the least joyful were Messrs. Burton and Sands, two wholly unimportant members of the Third Form.

They were sitting in their joint study, happily engaged in "brewing." After the third cups had been dispatched, Burton broke the soggy silence with, "Well, what about to-morrow?"

"To-morrow," replied Sands, with unction, "is a half-holiday. Being the last day but one of the term, I rather think we ought to celebrate. Any ideas?"

"Down town?"

"Town's sure to be full of beaks or monitors. No sense in getting lagged for being out of bounds so near the end of term."

"Blow down the pipes, and put out the lights?"

"Stale—we did that last term. I can taste gas yet."

"Go down into the furnace-room and rattle the irons under Potter's form?"

"Potter can *hit*," objected Sands. "I'm tired of Potter. Think of something else."

"It's about your turn," said Burton; "unless Pulteney Woods appeals to you."

"H'm," said Sands. "It might be done. But it's out of bounds, too."

"Then we might stay at home and read a nice, quiet story-book. Is that any better?"

"Ass!" said Sands, succinctly. "What's your notion of the woods? D'you mean to take catties?"

"That's the idea. Since the snow came the birds ought to be tamer and easier to hit. With luck we might bag a pheasant."

"Bag a haystack! There's not much sport in that! Now, a sparrow——"

"I'll give you a ha'penny for every sparrow *you* hit——"

"*Done!*" said Sands, sharply. "If I'm in form I ought to just about make my fare home. A ha'penny a shot, old hoss—don't you forget!"

Burton reflected gloomily that Sands was notoriously a good shot with a catapult and regretted his hasty tongue. However, he could not honourably back out of his engagement. Instead, he joined Sands in disinterring and inspecting their stock of artillery. Ranged on the study table they made quite an imposing show. Sands, the skilled marksman, had no fewer than six catapults, ranging from a species of heavy howitzer—carrying a stone or bullet at least half an ounce in weight—down to his pet "Stingy Demon" for swan-shot, a beautiful little weapon "vest-pocket size." Sands rarely travelled abroad without carrying at least one of his battery, together with suitable ammunition. Burton, not such a fanatical enthusiast, was content with a couple of more ordinary weapons. Having thoroughly tested the elastic, to make sure that it had not

"perished," the worthy couple repaired to fresh pursuits.

The next afternoon found them at half-past two safely within the prohibited area of Pulteney Woods. These lay a couple of miles from Dipcote and, being strictly preserved, were rigorously out of bounds. Yet from time to time the Dipcote cap might be (and occasionally was) observed on the ancient trails. The keepers had a long-standing feud with these disturbers of pheasants, and many had been the deep-breathed chase about them and around. But now Messrs. Burton and Sands were pleasantly conscious that there was little to fear. Sir Franklin's young keepers had enlisted to a man; those who remained were neither rheumatic nor paralysed, but they were not in the flower of youth or the best of training. The odds in a chase were heavily on the pursued.

The two sharpshooters walked quietly along for a time, catapults ready to hand in case prey offered, but for the moment not greatly concerned about hunting. Being in the woods was "jolly" in itself—the lone black trunks standing starkly up against the snow and leaden sky. There had been a touch of frost the night before, and the snow crunched sharply under foot. It hung on the branches, too; undisturbed save when a bird, alarmed at the boys' approach, flew from its resting-place. After one of these flutterers Sands tried a random shot, but, of course, without avail.

"Let's go into ambush for a bit and wait," suggested Burton, presently. "If we sheltered in Brickman's Cave and built a fire——"

"You goat! The smoke would bring every keeper within miles. But we might lie doggo in the cave for a bit, all the same. More chance of getting a shot or two."

They tramped on for half a mile, and in due course came to Brickman's Cave. It was more like an overgrown hole than a cave, named after a celebrated highwayman in days gone by. There was comfortable room in it for two or three people, if they did not want to stand up. It had a dry sandy floor, and was cosily sheltered from the wind. In front of the cave was a little clearing. Burton sighed with satisfaction as he observed the field of action.

"I'm ready for a rest," he declared. "Now, what about those caramels you've been saving up?"

"We'll rig up a sort of breastwork first," said Sands. "If we have some cover in front we shan't frighten any bird that comes along. Then you can have half a caramel if you say 'Please.'"

In front of the mouth of the cave they erected a light barrier of broken brushwood about a foot high, leaving a couple of loop-holes for gunnery practice. At last they were satisfied and retired within their shelter. They lay down on the dry sand, catapults and shot close at hand, and waited.

At the sixth caramel a sparrow hopped along the snow some fifteen yards in front. Sands was quickest off the mark, and the snow fluffed up a couple of inches from the tail of the astonished bird. Burton's vain shot as it flew away was hopelessly wide.

"A near thing for your ha'penny," said Sands. "'Twasn't bad for a sighter."

Burton grunted, but said nothing. At least the caramels were good. They waited, talking in whispers, and presently a second sparrow appeared. It also escaped, but left a tail feather behind as a tribute to Sands's marksmanship.

"Getting nearer!" was Sands's comment Burton dissented.

"I fired at the same time. How do you know it wasn't my hit?"

"'Cos I *know*," said Sands. "But, to prevent any arguing, we'll shoot turn and turn about. Bags I next shot."

"Beast!" said Burton, good-humouredly. And then—"Dash! I ate some of the paper."

"What paper?"

"Stuck round these caramels. Is it poisonous?"

"I dare say," said Sands, carelessly. "Perhaps you'd better not eat any more."

Burton disregarded the innuendo, and for awhile they lay whispering amicably without further incident. At last, when Sands was shifting to a more comfortable position, he felt Burton's hand grip his leg fiercely.

"H'sh!" hissed Burton. "Your shot!"

Sands looked, and breathed a grateful "Sportsman!" Stalking proudly over the snow came a splendid cock pheasant, unaware of his danger. With an inaudible sigh of thankfulness for such a splendid mark, Sands sighted "Stingy Demon." A moment later there was the ring of a bullet through the air, and the pheasant bit the dust, or rather snow. There was a shout of triumph from Brickman's Cave. The sharpshooters rushed forward to inspect the quarry. There was no need for additional measures. Sands's third shot had been magnificently accurate. The pheasant was dead, a prize of war.

"Golly, what a splendid chap!" said Burton, inspecting. "I say! Do you think we could get it cooked?"

"We might ask Mrs. Topham." (She kept the Dipcote tuck-shop.) "It wouldn't be safe to take it to the cook. Well, what about a move on? I'm getting a bit cold."

"Not a bad notion," agreed Burton. "I say, you are a ripping shot!"

"What are you fellows doing here?" said a voice behind them.

Burton and Sands leapt with fear. Turning, they saw their junior house-master, Mr. Ascham, looking anything but appreciative. The boys were silent. Dumbly they reproached their own carelessness. Why on earth had they been such asses as to shout? How on earth did Ascham happen to be strolling through the woods at such a time?

"Did you kill that pheasant?" demanded Ascham.

"Yes, sir."

"How?"

"A—a catapult, sir."

"H'm! You know catapults are strictly forbidden. Give it to me."

Mournfully, hopelessly, "Stingy Demon" was handed over. Grimly Mr. Ascham picked up the pheasant.

"You know the woods are out of bounds. You know this is pure poaching. I shall send the bird up to Sir Franklin, and report you to the Head this evening. Now go home."

The marksmen retreated in considerable disorder. "Does this mean a licking?" queried Sands as they scuttled off.

"Bound to," said Burton, dismally. "What rotten luck, after such a decent day! Have we any copybooks in the study?"

"No use anyhow. The Old Man is too cute not to spot a copybook."

Their fears were verified—amplified. Not only did it mean a licking—and a "sappy" licking at that—there was additional bitterness. After ten of the best had been administered that night, the Old Man pronounced sentence.

"You have disobeyed rules, grossly. The school breaks up on Tuesday morning, as you know. You will not be allowed to go home till the following day. On Tuesday I shall set you extra work. Now go."

They went, considerably disheartened. If this was life, was it not an overrated thing?

"*What* a swab!" groaned Burton when they were out of earshot.

"And I'll never get another catty like 'Stingy Demon,'" mourned Sands. "Stingy and Buster were my very best."

(Buster was the heavy howitzer already referred to.)

"You've still got Buster, anyhow," said Burton. "Lucky he didn't ask us if we had any more."

Sands took Buster from his pocket, and fondled him tenderly.

"Buster's all right for big game, but for a sweet little flying shot—oh! Stingy was the best that ever was!"

II

On Tuesday morning Dipcote departed—young Dipcote—with shouts and cheering. The previous night the school concert had been the usual success, and everybody (with two exceptions) had enjoyed themselves immensely. It was now eleven o'clock, and all the boys (save the two exceptions) had left for home and the Christmas holidays. Some of the masters had gone too, but the bulk remained on for the annual O.D. dinner. This always took place on the night of the breaking-up. Old Dipcotians usually rolled up to the number of five hundred or more, and slept in their old houses as far as was possible. This year the war had naturally made a difference, but between two and three hundred were expected from the four quarters of the earth. Already some scores were-revisiting their ancient haunts in town or school, yarning over old times and hearing the latest news, recognising forgotten chums, digging out the twenty-year-standing porter, or sampling the Old Man's (to many the New Man's) tobacco in the free sanctuary of his study. Many were very old boys indeed—judges, lawyers, ministers, civil servants of fame and reputation; many were fledgeling old boys. A score or more were in khaki, having got two days' leave from their regiments for the sake of the old school. And throughout the day came a steady stream of telegrams, from men who could not come themselves, but yet sent their good wishes to Dipcote at this annual refreshing. These were to be read at the dinner.

And in a vacant class-room Messrs. Burton and Sands, in fair round hands, wrote out execrable translations of Livy. They wrote, more or less, from nine to twelve, and again from two to four. . . . Livy . . . LIVY!

There is no need to dwell upon that painful

episode. It was part of the penalty decreed for:—

(*a*) Being out of bounds.

(*b*) Poaching.

(*c*) Being possessed of catapults.

Disgusted as they were, Burton and Sands had the sense to recognise that it was all part of the game. They had had their fun and must pay for it. At four o'clock the time of release came. Grimly they stacked their papers, handed them in to a grim Old Man, and drew deep breaths of freedom.

Now, only a few hours of day and one night separated them from the homeward trains. For the sake of something to do they walked over to inspect the preparations for the O.D. dinner.

This was to be held as usual in Big School. Here they found a clearance indeed. All the benches had been removed. The dais was decorated, and furnished with a piano for the evening's mirth. The body of the hall was occupied with tables, already spread with the whitest of cloths. Deft waiters were hurrying to and fro with glasses, cutlery, and all the impedimenta of a feast. Burton and Sands, easier of soul, surveyed the bustling scene almost with contentment. In due course they lighted upon Rogers, the School-House butler, superintending the army of Ganymedes.

"Going to have a jolly good spread, eh?" said Burton, genially. Rogers grinned.

"Same as usual. Are you two poachers"—the tale had travelled—"going to join in?"

"Not much," said Sands. "Only wish we could. I say, Rogers, d'you think we could look at it from the gallery to-night? We wouldn't make a row."

"Dessay—if you promise not to drop things on the people below."

"That wouldn't be a bad idea," said Burton; "watching from the gallery, I mean. We could hear some of the songs. Of course, we won't make any noise. Jolly decent of you, Rogers. I say, who provides all the grub?"

"Local caterer—Duke's."

"I didn't know Duke's had such a big show to draw on."

"Duke's only does the grub. Most of the waiters are down from London. Kem by the mid-day train, and go back to-night by the 1.10. Well, I must get on with my job." He turned away.

"Rogers's job seems a pretty soft thing," said Sands, as they moved on up the hall. "Telling other people to do things isn't so awful tiring. Hi! Confound!" There was an appalling crash. Not looking where he was going, Sands had bumped into a hurrying waiter who was bearing a stack of plates. A few were shattered on the floor. In the midst of a hail of recriminations, charges, and countercharges, Rogers hurried to the scene. "Telling people to do things" evidently was his job—a job he was thoroughly competent to fulfil. The reproachful waiter was spurred to a quick gleaning of the crockery harvest, while Burton and Sands were incontinently hurled forth into the safer regions of the playground.

"Did you kill that pheasant?" demanded the master.

"Dash!" observed Sands, when they were safely outside. "My ear's bleeding, isn't it? Rogers *has* a grip."

"No sign of blood," returned Burton. "What an ass you were to run into him."

Sands did not resent the accusation. He seemed mysterious—almost excited.

"I say! Did you hear what he said?"

"Rogers? Rather!"

"No, not Rogers. The other chap."

"Oh! the waiter! No; I didn't specially notice. He was too ratty to do more than bubble."

"*He bubbled in German!*" said Sands, with awe.

"Rot! I heard some good English, I'm sure."

"There was some English, but I *know* I heard some German."

His excitement infected Burton.

"You mean——"

"He might be a German spy."

"Rot!"

"Why not? We know there's still a lot loose about the country. For months past everybody's been talking about German waiters."

"Well, if he is," said Burton, "he couldn't do much harm here. What is there we could do?"

"There's nothing much to go on yet," admitted Sands. "Even if he is a German he might be a harmless one——"

"He must be. He wouldn't give himself away if he wasn't."

"The man was taken unawares. Being angry, he dropped into the first words that came. Didn't you notice when he cooled down a bit—almost at once, when Rogers came up—he spoke English all the time—jolly good English, too. No 'ze' instead of 'the,' for instance."

"I didn't notice. You must be jolly smart to spot that."

"I am," said Sands, simply. "Well—don't you think it might be worth while to watch him?"

"Is it any use? Is it likely Duke's would send a German spy up here?"

"'Tisn't Duke's. Probably they send an order to an agency, and the agency carts down their usual lot. You heard what Rogers said. Besides, the agency might even be run by a German."

"But what could he *do?*" persisted Burton.

"I dunno. But there's one thing—you know a lot of O.D.'s are up here to-night from their regiments. A waiter might hear them talking secrets."

"He *might*, but I don't think it's likely."

"Likely or not," said Sands, stubbornly, "we know he's a German, and he may be a spy. I mean to shadow the man, whether you do or not."

"Oh, well," said Burton, "if you do, I shall too. Now I vote we go and covet some tea."

They made a substantial tea, and devoted the rest of their spare time to shadowing. This consisted in haunting Big School and its precincts between the hours of half-past five and seven. It entailed much care and circumspection, for whenever the eye of Rogers fell upon the late plate-smashers he moved towards them with a threatening aspect. Not once, nor twice, nor ten times were they driven from the hall; and at last they were plainly told that if they showed their ugly mugs again within a mile of Big School they should not be admitted to the gallery. Disconsolate, disheartened, misunderstood, these would-be saviours of their country withdrew. The net result of the shadowing was: (*a*) Several glimpses of the suspected alien peacefully engaged about his business; (*b*) four cuffs (two each) from the enraged Rogers; (*c*) two hasty sips of claret-cup that stood conveniently behind a screen; (*d*) some débris that once had been chocolate *éclairs*. On the whole it seemed to be a poor bag.

III

"For they are jolly good fe-el-lows!
And so say all of us!"

The concluding lines of the chant were making the rafters of Big School ring. The time was a quarter past nine, and the toast that had been given musical honours was that of "His Majesty's forces." With envious eyes Burton and Sands watched the cheerful scene. They were safely ensconced in the gallery—really a short bridge that ran across the back of Big School, connecting two parts of the School House. They had been admitted by Rogers's connivance, and had faithfully kept their words not to make any disturbance. On the whole, things had been pretty dull. Watching other people eat is not inspiring. Dinner, and the toasts of the King and his forces, was now over. "Gentlemen, you may smoke!" said the chairman. (He was a very great man indeed, who had practically lived, eaten, and slept at the War Office since the beginning of hostilities. Now that the biggest rush was over he had been able to allow himself

a few hours' respite to motor down to Dipcote for the dinner.) A moment later another famous O.D. rose to propose the toast of "the school." Sands and Burton, yearning for comic songs, impatient of "jaw," determined on a short leave of absence. Quietly they left the gallery and made their way downstairs.

Scouting round the kitchen they made friends with one of the school maids, who presented them with two really handsome dollops of trifle, good stuff with genuine almonds and indubitable crystallised cherries on top. Just as they were finishing, half a cold chicken made an opportune appearance—an appearance which they acknowledged in a suitable manner. Then, with profuse thanks, they withdrew. "Now I can face those beastly speeches again," said Burton; but Sands dissented.

"Let's dodge about a bit," he said; and as there were still no sounds of music or song, Burton agreed. They went round to the back of the hall, and entered a small ante-chamber. To-night this was being used as a kind of pantry—rather, a clearing-house for plates. It was empty when they went in.

"Golly! what a mess!" said Burton, surveying the scene. One of the waiters passed through, carrying some bottles. He took no notice of the boys, being intent on remembering a variety of orders. Nothing of interest happening, Burton and Sands withdrew. They went out round by the Sixth Form, meaning to get a breath of air in the playground before returning. This they did. On their way back, just as they had reached the Sixth Form door, a figure on a bicycle appeared toiling down the road. "Rotten weather for biking," said Sands, in careless small-talk, as they paused to watch. The figure came closer, dismounted, and leaned his bicycle against the railings. Seeing the two boys, he spoke. It was a small telegraph-boy.

"General Wilmot here?" he said, briefly.

"Yes," said Burton.

"Telegram for him," said the boy, producing it. "Reply paid. Can I take it to him?"

"But he's at dinner—in the chair."

"Can't you send it in?"

"I suppose so," said Burton, doubtfully. "I'll ask Rogers."

He was saved the trouble, for at that moment a man came out of the Sixth Form door. It was the suspected alien, still, of course, in his waiter's garb.

"A telegram?" he said in good English, but with a slight Cockney accent. "I will take it." The boy handed it over: "Reply paid," he repeated, and the alien paused, studying the address. "Come in out of the cold," he said, suddenly. "You may as well wait by the fire." The little group of four went in together. They were hardly inside before the waiter turned to the two Dipcotians. "Will you please be kind enough to take this boy to the room along there?" He pointed vaguely down the passage. "I will bring back General Wilmot's reply as soon as it is written." Sands and Burton obeyed—in part. As soon as they were out of sight Sands left Burton with a word to take charge of the boy. He himself stole back quietly and peeped. It was a curious sight that rewarded him. The waiter, ostensibly busy with some plates, was holding the yellow envelope over a bowl of steaming water. In a moment the gum on the flap was loosened, and lo! the waiter was trying to read the telegram. Sands did not know that he tried in vain—for the wire was in cipher; but he watched the man swiftly seal up the envelope once more. Sands had disappeared before the detected alien had reached the door on his way to deliver his charge.

Bursting with his secret Sands went back to Burton. "I say!" he whispered, mysteriously, "come over here!"

Burton came out of earshot of the telegraph-boy. "What is it?" he asked. Sands told him breathlessly, and Burton goggled at him. "What shall we *do?*" he asked. They were discussing it briskly when the waiter returned with a slip of paper. He handed it to the telegraph-boy. "You are to get this off as quickly as possible," he said quietly, and completely at his ease. They all went out to see the messenger depart, and here a fresh sensation awaited them. The back tyre of the cycle had gone flat.

"A bloomin' puncture!" said the boy, disgustedly, and began to blow it up. But the more he pumped the faster the air seemed to escape. At last he gave it up as a bad job. "I'll have to ride slow," he grumbled, "or else walk."

"Well, be as quick as you can," said the man. "It's important."

The boy mounted and began his painful and laborious journey. Sands and Burton went round the corner to discuss. "Better go and report it," said Burton, at last. "The wire will go all right—some time. But we'd better tell the Old Man, and get that beast lagged."

They peeped round the corner to make sure

the coast was clear before starting. And even as they peeped they saw the waiter emerge. But now he was wearing his overcoat and a bowler hat. In his hand he carried a small black bag. He went out by the front gate, and began to walk briskly, but —in the opposite direction to the way taken by the telegraph-boy! They were puzzled.

"What's he *up* to?" whispered Sands. "He can't stop that wire now."

"Let's go and tell the Old Man," urged Burton.

"I'm going to follow and keep him in sight," said Sands, decisively. "You go if you like."

The thick elastic was drawn to its utmost limit. This time he must not fail!

But Burton refused. Loyalty to his chum, and a keen desire to be in at the death made him follow Sands. Together they set out in pursuit. The moon was bright and full. Fifty or sixty yards away they saw the figure of their quarry walking with a quiet briskness along the road. They waited a little to give him more law. Then, with superior quietness, keeping as far as possible in the shadow of the trees along the road, they set out in pursuit.

For half a mile the three, hunters and hunted, kept on. No word was spoken, not even a whisper was exchanged. To-night the frost had given a little: a slight thaw had began. Already the snow on the branches was beginning to melt, and the occasional but steady patter of the drops on the whiteness beneath made noises favourable to their progress. The crack of a trodden stick, or a carelessly kicked stone was less likely to be heard by the enemy. As if with a set purpose he walked sharply forward. At the cross-roads he paused, turned, and stood as if listening. Burton and Sands shrank back behind a tree-trunk and waited breathlessly. After standing for a full minute the enemy set off again. And then Sands allowed himself to whisper:

"Old man, if this keeps on we shall lose him. We *can't* bag him by ourselves. You must go back and tell them, and bring help. I'll keep on his trail."

"I'd rather stay with——"

"Don't jaw," said Sands, sharply. "This may be a big business. *Go back quick!*"

The loyal Burton forbore to argue, but set out on his homeward way with a heavy heart. As soon as he judged it safe he broke into a run, which he kept up till Dipcote was reached. There, careless of appearances or possible scoffs, he burst into the Big School in the middle of a comic song. The abrupt entrance provided an indubitable sensation, which was not lessened by Burton's dash up to the chief table where the Old Man sat. Here we may leave him, pouring out his suspicions, and return to Sands.

After Burton had left, Sands took up his lonely trail once more. Keeping the alien in sight, in due course he saw him climb a gate. Sands followed at a judicious interval, and watched him cross the field. Keeping along the hedgeside the pursuit was maintained. The field was crossed, and then another. Followed a ploughed field, where the going was beginning to be heavy under the influence of the thaw. Sands toiled on, stopping every now and then whenever the man stopped, twice lying down by the hedgeside to make assurance doubly sure. He could not guess the reason of this cross-country business, but it deepened his suspicions and made him all the keener to see what the man was after. At last, after they had covered about a mile in this manner, the man stopped and put his bag on the ground. Looking ahead, Sands began to have a hint of the reason. The high road curved considerably. At the point which they had now reached it was in sight again; the tall telegraph-poles marked the returning sweep of the road. They had taken a short cut across the fields; soon they would be on the road again where the going would be firmer. Sands was glad of that; but—why was the man taking a walk at this time of night? True, the station was not far from this point—a mile at most. Was he making for the station, to catch that train Rogers had spoken of? But the other waiters were going by that train, and they had not deemed it necessary to take this unusual method of approach. Crouched under the hedge, some hundred yards from the enemy, his heart beating fast, his breath panting, Sands watched the man open his bag. From it he took some obscure objects, and then became busy about his legs. What was happening Sands could not see. Presently the man stood upright, looked about him as if to make sure no one was watching, stooped, shut the bag and picked it up, and then climbed a gate and was again upon the high road.

This time Sands did not follow. Quietly but swiftly, he stole along the hedgeside until he could hear feet crunching. He kept a little in the rear, the hedge between them, until the crunching stopped. Sands stopped, too. The moon shone brilliantly, and Sands peered cautiously through the hedge. Yes; there was the enemy, standing still beside the foot of a telegraph-post, again listening. Sands did not move. Apparently the enemy was satisfied, for he gave a slight chuckle. The road was empty at this part, stretching clear both ways for a mile. Then with a swift, steady purpose he began to swarm up the telegraph-pole. The moonlight glinted on his legs, and suddenly Sands understood. He had climbing-irons! Fascinated, Sands watched him climb until he reached the iron footholds. After that it was plain sailing. In a few moments he was up among the insulators, and Sands knew well the reason. There could be small doubt now. He was certainly a spy, and he meant to cut the telegraph-wires! The telegraph-boy on his punctured cycle could not reach the post office for at least another quarter of an hour. If the wires were cut General Wilmot's reply could not reach London. And that might mean—anything—a thousand things—while Britain was at war.

Hidden by the hedge, seeing but unseen, Sands was in anguish. He was only a small boy, and could have no hope of quelling the foe by brute strength. If he shouted, the man might come down and murder him. If he did nothing, the wires would be cut. "What can I *do?*" thought Sands. "If only I had a gun or a revolver! If only——" Suddenly he remembered Buster, and his heart leaped.

Sands felt in his pocket. Yes! the faithful weapon was there. Stingy Demon, alas! was confiscated; but Buster still remained. And Buster was the howitzer catty, that carried a stone of half an ounce. A good shot might stun—might *kill* a man! Quietly, methodically, Sands scrabbled in the ditch for stones. He found a few—not the fine, smooth kind he would have searched for in times of peace. But now he must make the best of it. He placed the stones handy, and stood up, catty in hand. Even as he fitted the first stone he thought, "Suppose I *kill* him!" and his hand shook. Could he bring himself to fire like this upon a human being? Then he saw the glint of what he knew must be a wire-cutter in the man's hands. He thought of war and the opened telegram; the man *must* be a spy detached to shadow General Wilmot's movements. He must fire before the wire was cut.

That settled it. Sands's hands shook no more. He took deliberate aim, and a stone sang through the air. It missed the spy by a few inches and hummed harmlessly past his head. The man started and almost lost his grip. He paused to listen. *Could there be someone with an air-gun watching?* He never thought of a juvenile's catapult. As if ashamed of his nervous fears, comforting himself with the thought that he must have imagined it, he reached up again to the wires. Sands's second shot was still wide, but this time it

hit the post with a resounding smack. Now there was no room for doubt. The spy lost heart and began to descend, to make *sure*. . . . Sands knew that things were getting desperate, and he had no fancy for a cross-country chase in the snow. . . . And if he were caught! . . . This time he *must* not miss. The third stone was fitted with shaking fingers. He drew a deep breath. The man was half-way down the pole. Sands gasped and forced himself to steadiness. He aimed for a full three seconds. . . . The mark was a moving one. . . . If this shot failed he must take to his heels while there was yet time. . . . He must not fail. . . . The thick elastic was drawn to its utmost limit. . . . *Whiz-z-z!* And the third shot was the lucky one! The heavy stone caught the enemy full on the head and stunned him. His arms fell limply to his sides, and he fell the last ten feet, one leg doubled up beneath him. "Oh! I *hope* the brute's not dead!" sobbed Sands. After waiting to make sure this was not a ruse, he climbed the gate and approached. He was intensely relieved to find his enemy still breathing. There was blood on the snow from the wound in his head, and his leg looked queerly twisted. When the search party, following the tracks in the snow, found them, Sands felt that he could do with a lift himself. The alien's leg proved to be broken, but in other respects he was not seriously injured. "More's the pity!" growled a khaki-clad Dipcotian. "That was a capital shot, young man! You've got some nerve!"

But Sands felt that a warlike action needs the stimulus of open war to make one thoroughly at ease.

* * * * *

In the train, next day, Sands and Burton had a cheerful journey. On the way Sands extracted a catapult from his pocket. It was Stingy Demon.

"Decent of the Old Man to hand it back," he observed, fondling his treasure. "But I wish he hadn't made me promise not to use it at Dipcote!"

THE END

SIGNS AND BLUNDERS

Wilson (after he and Brooks have tried hard to direct a foreigner, but have failed to make themselves understood): "Look here, Brooks, *you* know the deaf and dumb alphabet. Try talking to him on your fingers."

Through the German Lines

Telling how a Belgian Boy and his English :: Friend Frustrated a Prussian Ruse ::

By JOHN MACKIE ◇ ◇ Illustrated by Stanley L. Wood

"WHAT on earth have we got here?" exclaimed the German officer, as through his spectacles he gazed at two boys whose grubby appearance suggested that they had been wandering about the country, and sleeping out for several days and nights. Lieutenant Schneider with a file of soldiers had brought them before the Officer Commanding. It was early in the afternoon, and the German army had been brought to a standstill in its advance owing to the stubborn resistance the Allies had been offering in the neighbourhood of Le Cateau, several miles to the south, causing the army of the Kaiser considerable trouble and apprehension. They had received orders that they must break down that resistance on the morrow; but unless they could do so by strategy the task promised to be a difficult and costly one indeed.

As the two boys, who could not have been more than sixteen or seventeen years of age, had not been directly appealed to by the officer, they wisely held their tongues. They knew the tricky procedure of the Teuton only too well, and they did not wish to be goaded into saying something that would be at once given the necessary twist and called incriminating evidence.

"They are spies, aren't they?" demanded the Officer Commanding.

The lieutenant's heels clicked together as he saluted and said:—

"Yes, sir, spies I should say. I only wanted your authority to——"

"Dispose of them in the usual way? Yes, yes. Then why didn't you say so? You really waste my time, Lieutenant Schneider. Take them away."

"But don't you think you'd better first hear what they've got to say for themselves?" said an officer who in the act of passing had stopped to gaze inquiringly at the group. His uniform was simpler and plainer than that worn by the Officer Commanding and Lieutenant Schneider.

At sight of him the Officer Commanding rose hurriedly to his feet, and saluted. His truculent assurance vanished.

"Certainly, sir; certainly," said the Officer Commanding, with a change of manner that was almost ludicrous in its suddenness. "I was just saying that Lieutenant Schneider would dispose of them—that is to say, take them to the guard-tent until we were ready to try them properly."

"Have you asked them who they are, and have you searched them for incriminating evidence?" asked the officer in the sober uniform, who, from the changed demeanour of the hitherto overbearing officers, seemed to be someone of very considerable importance indeed.

"Lieutenant Schneider," said the Officer Commanding, turning promptly upon his luckless junior, "I suppose you have searched and questioned them. What have you found upon them, and what do they say for themselves?"

"I have not had time to search them yet, sir," replied Lieutenant Schneider, weakly. "That one says he is a Belgian boy—calls himself Deschambeault. He says he was at Nouvion when his school was burnt down by our troops, when he and his companion—this other boy—wandered into the country and got lost. Anyhow, they were passing through

our lines, strangely enough, at the only spot where they could have successfully done so, when our men caught sight of them and made them prisoners."

"And you admit you haven't searched them yet," said the new comer, quietly, and in a tone that it was easy to see the Officer Commanding and Lieutenant Schneider did not like at all. "Boys"—he turned to the two youths and addressed them in exactly the same quiet voice as he had used when addressing the two officers—"first let me ask you, have you got any documents on you? You will be thoroughly searched, so you may as well speak the truth."

"No, sir," replied Deschambeault. "What we have already said is the plain truth. Our school was used by the German soldiers and then burned down. The few boys who were left there got away as fast as they could. That is to say, such boys as had no homes to go to. My chum and I have simply been wandering. You are the first soldiers we have spoken to since we left."

"But you were trying to avoid our soldiers," said the Officer Commanding. "At least, Lieutenant Schneider says so."

"We naturally were," replied Deschambeault, as if surprised that anyone should suggest otherwise. "We saw the plantation and made for it. It was the place where we thought we would be least likely to attract attention. We had seen your men, and knew they were Germans. We could not help ourselves being Belgians; but we were naturally anxious to avoid incurring your displeasure."

"You see, they admit trying to elude us, Prince," commented the Officer Commanding.

"And it was odd that if they were innocent of guilty design that they should try and push their way through that thick wood. But we were too many for them," supplemented Lieutenant Schneider, plucking up courage.

"I am quite capable of drawing my own inferences," curtly remarked the almost shabby man with the disconcerting steel-grey eyes who had been addressed as Prince. "If I may suggest it, you'd better search them—something you ought to have done before—though, personally, I'm inclined to think they've told you the truth about themselves."

The lieutenant signed to the soldiers, who promptly seized the two boys, and began a systematic search of their clothing. These German soldiers performed their duty expeditiously and thoroughly. Their method suggested the stereotyped work of automatons. They had been taught by rule how to search people. Their faces were dull and stolid—they were only parts of a great machine, and knew they were neither supposed to have souls nor wills of their own.

"Take off their boots, and rip open the soles," said Lieutenant Schneider, his face looking still uglier as he found his prediction in some danger of being falsified.

In another minute the boys' boots had been unlaced, and were off their feet. Lieutenant Schneider had drawn a long, sharp knife, and was about to cut the sole of a boot in two when the Prince stopped him.

"If you can't find out by the workmanship of that boot whether it has been tampered with or not, it is time you learned," he said. "Give it to me."

He rescued the boot and examined it.

"It is as it left the bootmaker," he observed. "And this pair will soon require re-soling."

He examined the second pair, and handed them back to the owners. Then he addressed the Officer Commanding and Lieutenant Schneider.

"If you had known your business," he said, "you would not have proposed to rip up those boots. You are gratuitously inhuman. It is such men as you who one day will make the name of Germany a reproach amongst the nations, if you do not mend your ways. In the meantime, better keep those two lads prisoners somewhere handy. I'd let them go only it would be injudicious, seeing that they can't have had their eyes shut. Get them some food and drink. Remember, you will be answerable for them."

Turning on his heel, the Prince beckoned to a couple of orderlies who were waiting for him some few yards distant. The three then disappeared along the lines.

As soon as they had gone the faces of the Officer Commanding and Lieutenant Schneider were anything but pleasant to look upon. Both of them regarded the boys with ill-disguised malevolence. The Officer Commanding looked as if he would have a fit. He turned to the lieutenant.

"Let one of your men take them to the guard-tent over there, and look after them," he said. "And you'd better give the beggars some bread and water, or the Prince is sure to find it out somehow. As for yourself, you'd better stay here and we'll arrange the details of that surprise project. Have you got the civilian clothing yet for the men?"

Lieutenant Schneider grinned, and nodded significantly.

"We made the last village we destroyed supply that," he explained. "But it is a very risky business, sir; and if the enemy for one moment were to suspect us, we'd be slaughtered on the spot."

"If you are careless enough to permit of the enemy suspecting you, then the sooner you are slaughtered the better," replied the Officer Commanding, grimly. "But we've got to make an opening in the enemy's lines near Le Cateau somehow, and that is the one way to do it. Send away these boys."

II

The boys had taken care to pull on their boots again the moment they had been returned to them. A minute later they were marched to the guard-tent, in the neighbourhood of which a large number of men were busy digging trenches and throwing up breastworks. But the guard-tent was occupied by a number of non-commissioned officers enjoying a looted meal; so their guard, pointing to a bank of earth alongside a trench that had just been completed, said:—

"You can sit down there, and I'll bring you something to eat. Goodness only knows why we burden ourselves with the likes of you! Just you stop there till I come back."

The boys did as they were bid. The private had only gone to a supply-tent some fifty or sixty yards distant, so evidently did not think it was at all likely that the prisoners would attempt to escape in the meantime. Indeed, with scores of men moving about everywhere it seemed a very unlikely contingency. The moment their guard had turned his back, the boy who up till now had not once opened his mouth, without a word of explanation threw back his head, and laughed aloud.

"Scott, you idiot! stop that for goodness' sake!" cried the taller of the two youths, who was the one who had acted as spokesman and was called Deschambeault.

"It is really too silly of them for words," exclaimed his companion. "Just fancy them arresting us as spies, and only asking one of us questions—you, because you happen to be a little taller than I, though I am a year older than you!"

"Like their stupid ways of going on," grunted Deschambeault.

"It was a bit of luck they didn't ask me any questions, otherwise they must have discovered that I am English, and they'd have given me short shrift when once they found out *that*."

"That is what I feared all the time," said the Belgian boy. "I was in terror lest you'd open your mouth and give the show away: and that is why, as I dare say you noticed, I always answered their questions promptly, so that you'd have no chance of chipping in."

"Is my French so awfully bad?"

"You are an inconsistent chap, Scott," said Deschambeault, smiling. "It's not the best French, certainly; but the fact remains that these Germans would have been sure to detect your nationality if you had sported it. But here's our guard coming with something to eat. Don't let him hear you speak more than you can help."

The soldier handed them half a loaf of brown bread and a canful of water, with the admonition to make their miserable lives happy. He did not seem particularly pleased to be guarding them when his comrades were probably exchanging experiences. Somewhere to right of them along the far-flung front the boys could hear the dull roar of heavy gun-fire. There was always an action of some kind going on somewhere to right or to left of them. Their guard did not speak. He seemed to be listening so as to catch scraps of the conversation that was going on inside the tent. Gradually he moved nearer it and farther away from his prisoners. An hour passed, and the boys were speculating as to what their captors intended doing with them, when an exclamation of a soldier in their neighbourhood drew their attention to an extraordinary spectacle.

It was a procession of several hundred men and women approaching. They were making their way through the lines as if to head in the direction of the allied forces.

"Belgian refugees!" exclaimed Scott. "Why is it they are not being guarded?"

"Just wait one moment," said Deschambeault, evidently puzzled. "They will pass this way in another minute or two. Sit down, and don't appear to notice them."

"You don't mean to say——" But Scott did not finish the sentence. A vague possibility had suggested itself to him, but it seemed so fantastic that he hesitated to put it into words.

The two boys sat down, and while the procession of refugees, some of whom seemed to be carrying household goods, passed within twenty or thirty yards of them, they tried to look as if it had not the slightest interest in the world for them.

But this procession had the very greatest

interest for them, for they had been pondering and debating over the unguarded words which the Officer Commanding and Lieutenant Schneider had made in their presence regarding some surprise project. They remembered the sinister remarks of the lieutenant as to how he had become possessed of civilian clothes belonging to the enemy. They also called to mind what the Officer Commanding had said about the slaughter that would take place if the Allies discovered the ruse that was being practised on them.

As they topped the little rise a couple of soldiers in khaki sprang up and ordered them to halt.

"Scott," said Deschambeault under his breath, and with something approaching awe and horror in his voice, though he evidently tried to keep cool, "just look at some of these women — they are not women at all, but German soldiers! And one can see they have arms concealed about them!"

"They are all German soldiers wearing the clothes of Belgian peasants!" exclaimed Scott. "Now one understands that brute Lieutenant Schneider's references. They mean to approach the lines of the Allies pretending they are Belgian refugees. Then as soon as they pass through they will fall upon the batteries which are the principal menace to the German advance, and so prepare and open the way for an attack in force. German troops are certain to be following them up so as to make a dash and push through."

"If the Germans once manage to cut the lines of the Allies, our people are done for," exclaimed Deschambeault, despairingly.

"Deschambeault," said Scott in a voice that contained no trace of emotion or excitement,

"they're not going to be allowed to do it. We've got to prevent them."

"I suppose there are nearly a thousand of them!" said Deschambeault, as he keenly scrutinised the passing masqueraders while he tried to appear as if they had no particular interest for him. "But how can we stop them, Scott? It will be a risky business escaping. How are we to manage it?"

"We've *got* to manage it somehow. Our guard doesn't seem to worry much about it. He seems to have made up his mind that we are of no account. And I suppose that if the Officer Commanding or that brute Schneider could only arrange an accident to happen to us, nobody would bother very much."

"So you think we may as well risk trying to escape and warning our people about the trap that is in store for them, as stop here to be 'accidentally' killed. If they succeeded in doing that, they mightn't even go to the trouble of concocting a story about a stray shell or bullet. They would probably say they shot us while trying to escape. Well, I'm inclined to think you're right."

"By Jove, Deschambeault, just look over there! Do you see that tall fellow on the right walking slightly apart from the others? That is Lieutenant Schneider, or I'm a Dutchman!"

"It is pretty sharp of you to have spotted that, Scott," said Deschambeault. "But in spite of his disguise I can see it now. He is evidently one of those in command. Well, if we could only contrive to warn our people we'd be able to square accounts with the man who suggested that we should be taken out and shot as spies."

"It's not Schneider altogether that I'm troubling about," said Scott. "It's not a matter of a personal grudge at all. It's something of infinitely greater importance. What we've got to do is to get to the Allies and warn them. We must do so even if we are shot in the attempt. Look, our guard has gone into the tent. There's looted wine or something there. Now is our chance."

"Come on," said the Belgian boy, rising to his feet. "Just let us stroll off leisurely at first along this passage-way which leads to the outside trenches. If we keep abreast of the procession everyone will be watching it, so we may escape notice. Anyhow, we must act as if we had nothing to fear. If we are questioned we'll have to say we're going to join the mob of refugees, and as we are going in the same direction, it will look like it. And we *will* join them if need be until we can leave them again; perhaps no one will ask any questions."

Both boys instinctively realised that their only hope of leaving the German lines and getting into those of their own people lay in bold action.

They were about to move off when, fortunately for them, they observed their guard pop his head out of the entrance to the tent. He stole a hasty look at them, but the boys were apparently merely watching the procession. "Sit down, Scott," said Deschambeault under his breath, and next moment they had both resumed their seats.

They were up again in another minute, for the guard had withdrawn his head. "Now," said Scott, "just jump into that empty trench and stroll along. The men are mostly having their dinners."

It was indeed a risky enterprise, for if an inquisitive sentry should spot and question them they were as good as lost. Fortunately for them, the trench seemed to run parallel to the route which the supposed refugees were pursuing, so that the attention of any soldiers who were in the immediate neighbourhood was distracted. Everyone was so interested in the procession that for a time they were quite unnoticed. Their hearts beat painfully, for every yard of their way was fraught with peril. They wisely did not try to go faster than the procession at this stage of the journey. They had to wait until the soldiers turned aside to view the motley throng of supposed refugees. Once only were they threatened with detection, and then it was a very near thing with them indeed. But Deschambeault's perfect knowledge of the German tongue got them through all right.

They kept on their way, but made as if to cross over to the procession. Every moment they expected the soldier who had challenged them to come after and stop them, but no such thing occurred.

"That soldier evidently thought we'd been pressed into accompanying the procession," observed Scott. "It is a good thing for us those privates are not allowed to exercise any initiative, otherwise our numbers might have been up."

They breathed more freely now; still they knew they would have to go some distance before clearing the enemy's lines. The country became more broken. They were now outside the main encampment and where the outlying pickets were stationed at intervals on rising ground so as to command a view of the country

towards the enemy's lines. On one or two occasions they all but stumbled across these pickets, but there generally happened to be a hedge or a ditch which they could make use of to avoid being seen. They were now in a pitiable condition. They were soaked to the skin, besides presenting a thoroughly bedraggled and disreputable appearance, but they were making good time, and every minute they were lessening their chances of capture by the Germans.

"Come on, Deschambeault," cried Scott as they struck a flat and well-turfed meadow. "Let's put on a spurt here, but don't forget we've got to keep the sun over there on our right, or we'll be getting turned round. That's one of the many useful things I learned with the boy scouts in England, though I never thought the time would come when I'd find it so jolly useful."

The water they had absorbed in the muddy ditches squelched up from their sodden boots as they ran; their clothes hung clammily and uncomfortably to their weary limbs, but their spirits rose with the thought that they were all the time getting nearer to the friendly lines of the Allies, and that their troubles would soon be at an end. But more important still than such considerations was the thought that by their action they would be able to outwit the enemy, and be the means of averting what might prove a catastrophe in the shape of a surprise attack upon their country's troops.

They passed a few deserted farm-houses. It was evident they had only been very recently vacated, for from one or two chimneys faint blue wreaths of smoke still ascended. To such houses, however, they took care to give a wide berth. Then all at once as they topped a little rise, a couple of soldiers in khaki sprang as if from the earth, and ordered them to halt and give an account of themselves.

III

"'Ello, my young dukes," cried a Tommy, whose vernacular sounded pleasantly to one of the boys at least. "You're in a hurry. Now, wot're you doin' 'ere?"

Without preamble Scott quickly gave an account of their plight, and also told of the German force which, disguised as refugees, was on its way to make a breach in the British lines.

"That's good news," said the non-com. in charge of the party. "I fancy the sooner you see our officer the better. Brown"—turning to a trooper and indicating a group of horses standing saddled behind a little rise—"just mount these chaps on our nags and rush them back to Captain Rayner. But first we'll have to search you—just as a matter of form, of course—for those Boches are up to every slim trick under the sun. You'll return, Brown, as quick as horseflesh will let you."

But of course there were no concealed fire-arms or papers about the boys, and in another minute they were mounted upon a couple of troop horses, and a leading rein having been attached to each and taken over by the trooper—just by way of precaution—the order was given, and the three started off at a canter.

Fortunately both boys could ride, otherwise they would have had considerable difficulty in maintaining their seats.

The trooper made a bee-line for another rise nearly a mile distant. They ascended a low hill, at the foot of which they were again challenged by another picket, and then they swung into a quaint old farmyard, and came face to face with a number of officers and men engaged in studying maps, and evidently debating weighty points.

The trooper handed the boys over to a non-commissioned officer who, without further ado, took them before the senior officer present. The officer scrutinised the boys keenly, and asked them a few leading questions which would have been difficult to parry if their news had in any way been concocted.

"What you tell me," said Captain Rayner, who was the officer before whom they had been taken, "would sound almost like a fairy tale if I had not had some experience of the methods of the enemy. You have done well, indeed. In the meantime I shall prepare the pickets to allow the supposed refugees to pass to a spot where they can be dealt with according to their deserts. And now I will send you on to the General, who is about a mile from here."

In less than half an hour the boys stood before the British General. He heard their story and said:—

"Your statement corresponds in all details with what I have just learned. Our field telegraph has already acquainted me with these facts. The supposed refugees have already been allowed to pass by the outlying pickets. A strong force of British and French troops are already working round in their rear to cut off their retreat, and repel any advance of the main body of the enemy. They will be here

very shortly. In the meantime I will see that you are well looked after. And now let me shake hands with you, and thank you for the loyalty and the grit you have shown this day. But our thanks are not going merely to take the form of words. We will meet again. Captain Burgoyne, please see that our friends have every comfort and attention."

The boys were taken to a tent, where they first had a much-needed wash with warm water. They were then provided with some dry clothes. It did not matter if they were a size or two too large—that was a detail. After a good meal they expressed a desire to see how it fared with Captain Schneider and his fellow-masqueraders.

"I do not know that I am justified in granting your request," said the officer, "but I think, all the same, that you are entitled to have a peep at them. They are approaching up a little valley close by at the present moment. Come, and I will show you."

Within a few minutes the officer had taken them to the brow of a small valley, standing back

To their surprise and terror, the disguised Germans were met by a withering fire, while from unseen trenches leapt kilted, cheering Highlanders with gleaming bayonets.

a little from which were hundreds of British men and guns. The boys noticed that though the sham refugees were at least a thousand strong, the concealed force which hemmed them in on every side was still stronger.

"Look, look!" cried Deschambeault, "the refugees have got the word of command and are scattering! They have produced their arms and are swarming up the side of the valley to take that position and hold it until their friends come up. They have shot the men who were supposed to be taking them before the General. They are shooting down our fellows right and left."

But the tricksters did not shoot long! From the crest and sides of the encircling hill-side sprang a jet of flame. From cunningly concealed trenches there rained a veritable hail of death upon them. The Germans rushed to seize a given point so as to take up a position there, and hold their own at least until their expected relief came. But they were met by a withering fire, while from hitherto unseen trenches leapt kilted, cheering Highlanders with gleaming bayonets. This was the last straw. The enemy fairly flung down their weapons and ran. From afar there came the sound of field-guns and rifle fire. It was answered by a still louder and more sustained din as the British showed up and unexpectedly barred the way of the German relief and attacking force.

"I think you have seen enough now, boys," said the officer. "The enemy's treachery has met with a fitting punishment. There is still much up on the slate against them, but that can stand over till another day. Your clothes will be dry by the time you get back to camp, and then the General will want to see that you get a safe conduct to old England. Let's march."

COMPETITION FOR MARCH

First Prize in each Class: Goods to the Value of Half a Guinea
Second Prize in each Class: A Book by a "Captain" Author
AND TWENTY CONSOLATION PRIZES

THE SIX BEST STORIES IN VOL. XXXII

Which do you consider the best six short stories in the present volume of THE CAPTAIN? Your choice must be made from all the tales published in the numbers from October to March. *The two serials*, of course, are not to be taken into consideration.

When you have come to your decision, write the titles of the six stories you select beneath each other, in what you consider their order of merit, and send the list to us, taking care to observe the following

RULES AND CONDITIONS

1. The name, address, and age of the competitor must be written above his attempt.

2. No competitor may submit more than one entry.

3. Competitors will be divided into two classes, comprising those sixteen years of age and over, and those under sixteen respectively. For the purposes of judging this competition, the six best stories for each class will be decided by the votes of the competitors.

4. Entries must be received not later than Saturday, March 20th, 1915, addressed to the Competition Editor, THE CAPTAIN, 8, Southampton Street, Strand, London, W.C., the word "Voting" being written in the top left-hand corner of the envelope.

5. Winners of the first prizes may select goods to the value of half a guinea from any firm advertising in THE CAPTAIN.

6. The Editor's decision must be accepted as final.

COMPETITION RESULTS

"CHRISTMAS MESSAGES"

CLASS I.—WINNER OF FIRST PRIZE: R. H. COCHRANE, 3, Wyndham Park, Bray, Co. Wicklow.

WINNER OF SECOND PRIZE: MARGARET BIRD, 84, Warwick Road, Carlisle.

CLASS II.—WINNER OF FIRST PRIZE: JOHN DAVIE, 76, Thirlestone Road, Edinburgh.

WINNER OF SECOND PRIZE: J. H. GRUMMITT, "Seacroft," Bognor, Sussex.

CONSOLATION PRIZES: Reginald Roberts, New Southgate. Janet Atkinson, Tamworth; Cyril Simm, Huddersfield; Fred Brown, Birmingham; E. H. Bishop, West Ealing. John Dinsdale, Grantham; R. Curwen, I.O.W.; L. V. Legg, Seven Kings; Denys Kilburn, Sidmouth; Ken Middleton, Strathpeffer; C. E. Maitland, Ryde; Barry Omahony, Tullaught; R. Crook, Huddersfield; D. F. Robinson, West Bridgford; H. M. Burt, Bedford; James Sturrock, Edzell; Thomas Cave, Yeovil; Geoffrey Platt, New Brighton; Edmund Brown, Dukinfield; L. Hamilton, Anerley.

"WORDS WANTED"

The omitted words are as follows: Morning, way, sought, proved, seen, stranger, decided, await, felt, soon, shape, accordance, experiences, letter, that, surprise, early, next.

CLASS I.—WINNER OF FIRST PRIZE: JOHN W. DRUMMOND, 3, East Castle Road, Edinburgh.

WINNER OF SECOND PRIZE: EMMA MITCHELL, St. Winifred's, Coleraine, Ireland.

CLASS II.—WINNER OF FIRST PRIZE: R. E. HOWE, Wellington Farm, Hampton Hill, Middlesex.

WINNER OF SECOND PRIZE: D. K. PARTRIDGE, 9, Talbot Street, Normanton.

CONSOLATION PRIZES: E. J. Gits, Wimbledon; A. D. Irving, Bedford; Mabel Baxter, Rochdale; K. Shankland, Kilmalcolm; E. Campbell, Kilmalcolm; G. A. R. Williamson, 33, Vincent Road, Croydon; E. M. Smith, Eltham Park; H. P. Carr, Uttoxeter; M. Bouillet, Hampstead Road; B. Donne, Oxford; H. W. Matthews, I.O.W.; A. J. Gardham, Leytonstone; Fred Hawksworth, Nantwich; H. Cornewall, Brighton; R. Blenkinsop, The Avenue; G. Millington; L. G. Fowler, Regent's Park; F. R. Parham, Bath; A. P. Mason, Nottingham; G. N. Ward, Matlock; N. Anderson, Edinburgh.

"THE CAPTAIN" WAR PORTFOLIO

Some of the Most Stirring Episodes of the War, depicted by Lionel Edwards, E. S. Hodgson, John de Walton, and Archibald Webb.

Serbia had been invaded by large numbers of the enemy, and things were not going well with her, when the aged King Peter himself appeared before his troops. "Soldiers of Serbia," he said, "your old King has come to die with you," and then he urged them to make one more effort to rid the country of the enemy. So inspiring were his words that a brilliant victory was soon achieved by the heartened Serbian warriors.

During the fighting in Eastern Prussia, a Russian cavalry brigade with a horse artillery battery sighted a limbered up and again shelled her. The airship, dropping bombs without effect.

German airship, and immediately opened fire. The Zeppelin turned and made for home, but the guns was soon compelled to descend, the whole of the crew being made prisoners.

The first naval Victoria Cross of the war has been won by Lieut.-Commander Holbrook, who in Submarine B11 entered the Dardanelles, dived under five rows of mines, and torpedoed the Turkish battleship "Messudiyeh." Though harassed by gun-fire and torpedo-craft, the submarine escaped, after being submerged on one occasion for nine hours.

A major of artillery directed the fire of his guns during the struggle around Ypres by a telephone placed on the top of a farm building. The Germans surprised him, but, before they could take him, he uttered his last words through the telephone: "Do not obey any further orders: the Germans are here." Nothing has since been heard of this gallant officer.

In a certain village held by the enemy, it was found that machine guns had been placed at the windows of the houses, and many lives were lost in the effort to take it. Every house in one street had to be captured by storm, and fierce hand-to-hand conflicts took place in the narrow halls, on staircases, and in upper rooms, but by nightfall the Germans had been dislodged and the village was in possession of our troops.

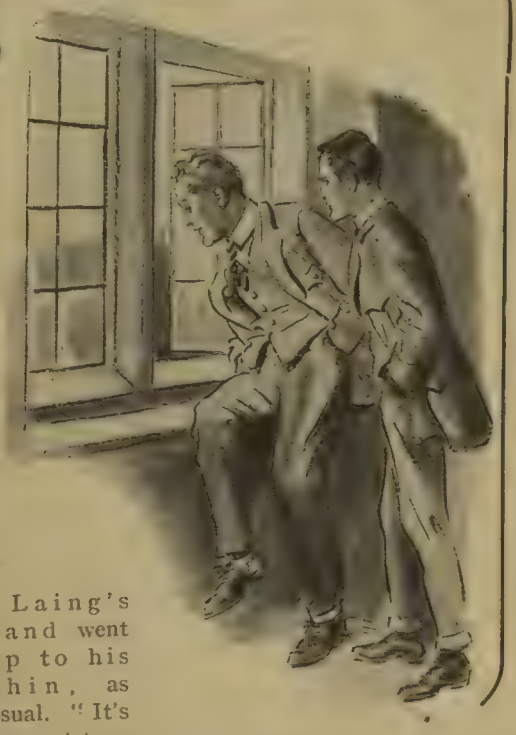
During the bombardment of Lodz, a Russian colonel of artillery, aided by volunteers, fixed a field telephone within half a mile of the enemy's guns. Then, though the German searchlights were sweeping the ground, he directed the Russian fire by telephone, and in a short time the German battery was silenced. The brave colonel and his companions returned uninjured.

WHO CARES?

A Public School Story

By HYLTON CLEAVER

Illustrated by H. M. Brock, R.I.



CHAPTER XXVIII

COUNSEL'S ADVICE

EARLY that evening Weldon was walking across the school grounds. He stopped as he met Laing, and with an airy wave of the hand indicated the retreating figure of Menzies.

"I have just addressed to your housemate," said he, "the following momentous words—'Hullo, pithy face!'"

"Indeed," said Laing.

"Yes. In answer he said, 'That's a curious thing about Roscoe, isn't it?'"

"He said that?"

"He did. I said, 'Menzies, there are one or two curious things about *you*, too. I have been wanting to tell you what I think for a long time. If you have a moment to spare, I'll just enumerate one or two of your more striking eccentricities.' I thought he was talking about Roscoe playing in the match."

"Well?"

"He wasn't apparently. He was full of something else. It's a sensational yarn about Roscoe and a handkerchief."

"What an outrageous fool the man is," said Laing angrily. "Has he been telling everyone?"

"Why, is there anything in it?"

"He came to me," said Laing, "with a scorched handkerchief stinking of oil, and swore he'd found it on the ruins of Mrs. Kent's place. It had got Roscoe's name on the corner, and—well, Roscoe's got a grudge against the old woman, and he'd—he—er—he doesn't strike you as a chap who'd stick at anything. He nearly broke Gardner's back when he first came because he thought he'd sneaked. He's done one or two other pretty dirty things, too. Now they find this—*his* handkerchief at a place that they think has been *set* on fire!"

"H'm!" said Weldon. "Where's the handkerchief now?"

"I've got it."

"Well, what are you going to do?"

Laing's hand went up to his chin, as usual. "It's a rotten business," said he. "I shall have to see a master about it, I suppose."

"Who will you go to?"

"I've been thinking. I shan't go to Godwin, that's certain, and I don't want to rush into the Head with it. I thought of consulting Sainsbury; he's a sound, sane sort of chap."

"I tell you what," said Weldon. "Benham's coming over to-night; he's here for a few days with some people in Harley—that girl who comes to watch matches and her aunt, you know. Well, he knows something about Roscoe, doesn't he? I mean, he'd be better to see even than Sainsbury; he'd probably help more, and he's not an official."

Laing nodded.

"You're quite right," said he. "I'll talk it over with him. Is he going to look in at your place?"

"Yes. Come over in about an hour. He'll be there by then."

"Righto. I want to get hold of Menzies first. If the fool's rushing about telling everybody, he'll have to be stopped."

He nodded, turned, and moved away hurriedly in the direction Menzies had taken. But it was too late. The harm had been done. A rumour of that kind had only to be told to a few men, and it was all round the school in

an hour. Already Harley buzzed with this new sensation. Nobody doubted its truth. Roscoe's name was too bad, too notorious. Unheard, he was condemned. The fact that he had not been seen during the evening gave colour to a wild report that he had been arrested.

And, lonely and miserable, Roscoe wandered alone in the darkness, and thought and thought.

His way had seemed clear. Things had been brightening. Barbara and Benham had helped him to show his possibilities. Now in a moment everything had suddenly turned black and cold and hard. His bad name, he knew, would of its own strength condemn him. Nobody would believe him innocent.

And how much did Menzies know?

Laing told Benham that evening. He did not elaborate. Laing never did. Benham heard just the plain statement of facts that had been given to Roscoe himself and to Weldon.

At first Benham smiled sardonically.

"For one thing," he said, "there is no proof whatever in a burnt handkerchief, because no sane man setting fire to a shop would use a handkerchief."

"No sane man," pointed out Weldon with a certain dryness, "would set fire to a shop at all."

"Also," continued Benham, "we will credit Roscoe with having sufficient sense not to use a handkerchief with his name on the corner."

"People always leave stupid clues," observed Laing. "Murderers go in for brilliantly organised plans, then make some babyish slip. Why do burglars leave thumb-marks about the place?"

"Then you think he knows something about it?" asked Benham.

"It's not for me to say. I don't make any charges. But I can tell you what the school thinks. Menzies has rushed round, as pleased as if he'd won the Calcutta Sweep, and told everyone. Roscoe's bad name doesn't give him a chance. People are hanging him with their mouths already."

By degrees Benham grew thoughtful, then solemn, then worried. He felt a certain personal responsibility in the matter. He looked at Laing, and then at Weldon. Neither man so much as winked. There was a deadly, serious atmosphere abroad.

"Don't see Sainsbury yet," said Benham. "Try to keep it away from the beaks for a bit."

"Everyone's yapping even now," said Weldon.

"Well, give him a chance. Let me talk to him a bit. Give me twenty-four hours. I'll paddle round and see what I can do. Here's my address in Harley, in case you want me."

"All right," said Laing; "we'll give you till this time to-morrow. And good luck!"

Benham rose, shook hands with the other two, and went. As a man of sense, he journeyed in a line as similar as possible to that favoured by the bee, to Barbara, and told her the story.

For a time she merely sat and looked very, very miserable. Then suddenly she sat bolt upright in her chair, eyes sparkling, cheeks aglow.

"*I* know," said she. "I've *just* thought! How absurd!"

"Be lucid," said he, "if possible."

Barbara told him excitedly. Benham looked at her hard, then suddenly laughed too, and slapped his thigh and punched his ribs.

"It's no use to go back now," said he. "I'll go to-morrow."

"First thing?" said she. "Poor old Jimmy."

"First thing," he repeated, obediently.

CHAPTER XXIX

WAY LAING BROKE OUT OF GODWIN'S

THAT night Laing went to his dormitory with thoughtful mien, and undressed slowly. Judged by the Harley standard he was old, but from the worldly point of view he was young for such responsibilities as were devolving upon him. But, as when Usherwood had left Godwin's at a critical time, so now that he realised that his way in this matter must be strong, he pulled himself together, feeling again that firm grip of himself that makes a man courageous. He looked casually round the beds, as was his custom, before reporting "All in" when Mr. Godwin appeared on the threshold. One bed was empty, and for the moment he wondered why. Had a man been transferred? Was anyone in the infirmary? He could not remember any reason for the vacancy.

"Whose bed's that?" he asked, abruptly.

The man in the adjoining cubicle looked up nervously, as if anxious not to be accused of sneaking, and hesitated a moment. Laing looked back at him placidly, and his manner somehow implied trust.

"Roscoe's," said the boy, quietly.

Something inside Laing jumped, as if an imaginary dentist had touched up a nerve connecting with his heart. Then he stood perfectly still in the light from the gas-jet in his annexe, and thought.

"D'you know," he said at last, "why he isn't there?"

In a flash he had guessed himself, knew that every boy present must know, that in the morning the whole school would be ringing with the news that Roscoe had run away. The story of Menzies' find was already a school sensation. Yet for appearances' sake he put the question in a quiet, natural tone.

"I don't know," said the boy. "He hasn't been seen this evening. It's the half day to-morrow, and there wasn't any prep."

Laing still stood perfectly motionless. There was something in the dead silence of the dormitory that had its effect on his nervous system. Then, as he stood thinking, the door opened, and Mr. Godwin was there, peering into the corner of the room at Laing's figure in the limelight.

"Not in bed yet, Laing?" said he, querulously. "Er—are they all in?"

For what seemed to the listening boys perhaps a full five seconds, Laing hesitated, then he said, crisply: "All in, sir."

Mr. Godwin stepped back and shut the door. Laing reached up to his gas-bracket and turned out the light, but in the darkness he sat on his bed still thinking.

Half an hour later he decided, and he stood up, felt his way to a chair, and picked up some of his clothes. As if on an afterthought he lit his gas again, leaving the jet very low. Then he commenced to dress. Not a boy stirred. In ten minutes he was ready. He turned up his coat collar, put on a cap, then he looked hesitatingly round the beds.

"If," he said at last, very quietly, "any of you are awake, I can't stop you listening, but I appeal to the honour of each of you not to look. I should like you to trust me."

Not a head stirred, but it is significant that afterwards there was not a boy in the dormitory who was not deeply grateful to the luck that had put him in Laing's dormitory that term and on that night.

Then Laing walked quietly across the room, opened the door, and slipped out. As he went downstairs his faint footsteps quickly died away in the distance.

"My aunt!" whispered a hushed voice, "what a rag!"

"Shut up, you fool," came in a murmur from another bed. "Can't you keep quiet when he wants you to?"

And "Shut up both of you," said another slightly more authoritative whisper. "I'm in charge now, and I'll have any man who speaks tanned to-morrow by Laing."

Laing crept along the corridor on the ground floor, and made his way to the door at the far end; very carefully he worked back the bolt, and turned the handle. The night air whisked in; he stepped out, and closed the door cautiously behind him. Then he peered into the darkness for a moment and started across the lawn—a minute later he was on the road and hurrying in the direction of Harley.

Benham sat in a comfortable arm-chair in the "Westholme" sitting-room, with his legs stretched out before him, and his hands behind his head.

"It's long past ten o'clock, Barbara," said Mrs. North presently.

"I've noticed it," said Barbara, smiling.

"Then you may retire," said Benham, placidly, "and in jumping into bed; try and hit the centre. I once sprang in so violently, after watching the 'Varsity sports, that I cleared the whole bed and landed against the wall about half-way up."

"Did you stick there like a fly?" asked Barbara.

"No," said he. "Oh, no. I found the wall-paper pattern useful. Climbed down a long green stem with roses all the way down it like the spikes on a telegraph-post."

Then a knock came at the door, and a maid entered the room.

"There's a gentleman to see you, Mr. Benham, sir," said she.

"To see me?" said Benham. "What sort of gentleman? Hasn't got a trombone in his hand, has he?"

"I think he's from the school, sir," said the maid.

Benham shot up and strode across the room.

"Who?" said he, anxiously, "Where is he? What—oh, there he is! Why, hullo, Laing! What's up?"

Laing nodded briskly. There was no sign of panic about him; he seemed calm and grave.

"Sorry to trouble you, Benham," said he, "but you gave me your address, and it's urgent. I've broken out of Godwin's."

"What for?" said Benham. "What's up?"

"Roscoe's bolted."

Benham took his hand out of his pocket and gripped Laing's arm.

"Bolted?" he repeated, anxiously. "What on earth for? Are you sure? Why, how did it happen? Do the beaks know?"

Laing explained.

"I suppose he's fed up," said Benham; "but what a shocking ass he is. It's all right—I've found out all about it—he's cleared."

"Cleared—how?"

Benham told him.

"We'd better go out at once," he concluded. "We mustn't let the beaks get to know."

"That's what I thought, so I came round to get you to help."

"I'll come now," said Benham. "Just a sec." He turned and hurried back into the sitting-room. "I'll have to go out for a bit, Mrs. North," he said, "if you don't mind. Could you let me have a key? I might be a bit late back."

"Why, yes," was the answer. "What's the matter? Is anything wrong?"

Benham hesitated a moment, as a man always hesitates at such times. After all, the pause gives extra impetus to the weight of one's news.

"As a matter of fact," he said, "young Roscoe—like an ass—has bolted."

Barbara jumped to her feet. Mrs. North shut up her book with a bang. "*What?*" they said together. "*Run away?*" Thus was the news passed on.

* * * * *

Outside, Benham took Laing's arm.

"You'd better get back," said he. "On second thoughts, I should think it's wisest. You've done all you can. If they find out that you're missing too, it'll be all up."

"Nonsense," said Laing. "I'm coming with you."

"I wouldn't," said Benham. "Go back. They're bound to miss you. You've put me on the track, and I expect I shall find some news of him at the station, or else *somebody* will have seen him."

"Supposing you find him—how will you get him in?"

"I'll look after him till the morning, then I'll bring him along to the fives courts before breakfast. I'll leave the rest to you. Nobody need know that he's been out all night. If I don't find him I'll come myself and let you know."

"Very well," said Laing at last. "P'r'aps you're right. I'll go back. But if he doesn't turn up I shall be in rather a hole."

Benham nodded.

"Trust me," he said. "I'll find him. I'm getting interested."

"Anyway," said Laing, "it's good to know that he didn't do it."

Then he turned, crossed the road, said "Good night" again, and went back to school. Benham set off for the station.

CHAPTER XXX

SHOWING HOW ONE THING LEADS TO ANOTHER

HALF an hour later, the Old Boy was leaving the station yard none the wiser — nobody there had noticed Roscoe or seen anybody answering his description. A slumbering policeman who was propping up the wall at the corner with his shoulders, and who seemed startled and somewhat scandalised at being addressed, also proved non-informative. Benham stood and looked at the three roads that stretched away into the gloom, no one of which was any more likely to reveal Roscoe than its rivals; and as he waited and thought, two enormous lights swung into the black night and came down the road to the tune of the peaceful buzzing of a smoothly running motor.

The car was driven by a large man in a heavy ulster who leaned negligently back in his seat; as he approached the station, another much smaller figure who sat behind, wrapped in rugs, bent forward suddenly, and reaching out touched the driver on the shoulder.

"I say," he said, "there's Benham. Just a minute; could we stop?"

The large man glanced round.

"Eh—what?" he said, kindly. "Where—?"

"That's a man I know—over there at the corner."

The other applied his brakes, and turned the car towards the kerb where Benham stood thoughtfully watching its shape gradually assume definite proportions out of the night; as it drew up he looked interestedly at the driver, turning from him to the boy behind. One casual glance at the muffled figure made him peer through the darkness again more earnestly. Then rugs and coats were thrown aside and disclosed Roscoe. He looked up and smiled wearily.

"Hullo, Benham," said he. There was a suggestion of apology in his voice. Benham stepped forward like a footman angrily called

by a king, laid both hands on the side of the car, and stared at James as if he had stepped out of an oil painting.

"What on earth——" he began. "Why—where in the world *have* you been to, you utter little jackass ?"

"I've—I've sprained my ankle," said the Maggot, boldly.

Benham looked down in the direction of Roscoe's foot as if expecting to see something growing out of it, then up again at the Maggot, and finally at the driver, who had turned round in his seat and was regarding the pair with amusement in his eyes.

"I found him three or four miles out," he explained, "sitting beside a ditch—nearly ran over him in the dark. He shouted 'Hi ! ' and I 'Hi'd,' and found he'd sprained his ankle, so I bundled him in and brought him along. I meant to leave him at the school——"

"Can't do that very well," said Benham. "His house captain, being a sportsman, reported him in."

"H'm—what *shall* we do with him, then ?"

Benham pursed up his lips and turned to the Maggot.

"Well, Master Roscoe," he said, "what shall we do with you ?"

"*Who ?*" said the man at the wheel, sharply.

"Roscoe," said Benham, looking up at him.

The man threw off his rug, switched off, and, springing hurriedly out of the car, came round beside Benham and looked anxiously into the Maggot's face. For a few seconds he gazed fixedly at his ill-shaped features, with bulging eyes. Then he put his hands on his hips and took a deep breath.

"Is there," said he, "any other Roscoe at your school, young man ?"

"No," said the Maggot.

"Then this," said the man, "is about the most remarkable coincidence imaginable. This," he added, earnestly, "is really most marvellous. D'you know," he went on, looking round at Benham, "that I was motoring down from town with the idea of putting up at an inn and of going to the school to-morrow morning to find this very boy—*this boy*, that I come across in a lonely country road, with a sprained ankle ?"

"I did not know it," said Benham, who was becoming slightly *blasé* with these continual little flutters of excitement.

"No," said the other, "and I can tell you something else that you probably don't know. I can tell you *why* I was coming down. This boy—you, sir"—he nodded his head at Roscoe—"this boy is my son."

Benham stepped forward to the side of the car, and stared at Roscoe in astonishment.

Benham settled his hat a little more firmly on his head, and awaited further developments, almost with the air of a Sherlock Holmes being told some boring pickpocketing story.

"I didn't know, sir," he said, "that he *had* a father."

"And until this week, I, sir," said the other, "did not know that I had a son."

Roscoe's part in this little dialogue was that of the attentive listener. His head was cocked on one side in the manner of a dog listening for his master's footsteps. His eyes glinted excitedly, a hectic spot in the middle of each cheek, and mouth and ears well open told in their turn that no word had escaped him.

"You are my—my *father*," he stammered presently.

"It is a long story," was the answer. He gripped both Roscoe's hands and stared into his face, and stared and stared.

"Oh, I say," said Benham, presently. "I'd almost forgotten. There's no need to worry about that fire, you know, Roscoe. It's all right. You needn't lie awake to-night. It's going to be cleared up in the morning."

"Cleared up," said Roscoe, anxiously. "How?"

Benham told him.

Roscoe's father listened interestedly; at last he moved towards his starting-handle.

"What *shall* we do with him?" he asked, jerkily, bending down in front of the car.

"I think," said Benham, "I could take him back to Mrs. North's to-night. Early in the morning I'll take him along to the fives court, where Laing—the school captain—is going to wait for us. If he went back now they'd want to know why Laing reported 'all in.' In the morning he'll have to explain that he sprained his ankle to-night, but didn't say anything till the morning. They'll think he did it getting into bed or something."

"I'd better go along to the school to-morrow, then, as I intended," said Roscoe's father, "and meet him all over again. Come on, jump in, will you? We'll get along. Which is the way?"

He spoke in the tone of a man of the world temporarily thrown out of his stride. After all, unsteadiness in the voice may be excused to a father meeting a son of fifteen for the first time in his life under such melodramatic circumstances. It is not an everyday occurrence. He let in the clutch. The car started forward. Benham sat beside him pointing out the way with an intensity somehow reminiscent of a member of one of the rescue parties hat one sees on cinema films careering along wayside railway tracks at about five hundred miles an hour.

As Benham opened the door of "Westholme" with his borrowed key, Mrs. North came out of a room with a look of motherly anxiety.

"Have you found him?" she asked.

"It's all right," said Benham. "He's outside."

A minute later a woeful, foolish-looking Maggot was being assisted to the front door between Benham and a large man in a huge ulster.

Barbara called out for information from over the banisters, but nobody heeded her.

"This," Benham was announcing with the self-possessed serenity of one who had studied his part with care, "is Roscoe's father, Mrs. North."

He drew attention to the gentleman indicated by pulling him forward by the sleeve of the coat with one hand.

Mrs. North put out her hand uncomprehendingly.

"His uncle?" said she.

"His father," repeated the guilty party. "It's a long story."

Mrs. North waited, and looked at him as if feeling the way through a long, dark mental passage.

"Had—had James gone to meet you, then, Mr. Roscoe?" she said at last, dazedly.

"That," said he, "I couldn't say; anyway he *did* meet me, and in a particularly remarkable manner."

"And you are his father?"

"So they tell me," said he, with a kind of solemn joy.

She looked from one to the other, comparing looks.

"I could believe it," she said, at last. "There *is* something—the square head, the nose," she nodded slowly. "Come in," she said; "you must tell us all about it."

"I hear you have been very kind to him," said the long-lost father, following her in. "P'r'aps it is due to you."

A soft footstep, unheard by the group in the hall, betokened the approach of Barbara, who stood on the stairs wonder-struck, a vision in masses of quilted Japanese silk from chin to toes, her loose hair hanging round her shoulders, her mouth parted, eyes big with astonishment. Roscoe looking up at last, noticed her with a start, and smiled bashfully.

Then the party moved into the adjoining

room chattering, and the door would have closed behind them, but Barbara sprang nimbly down the last few stairs, and an outstretched hand just kept it ajar in time. And for an hour she stood outside listening with a burning interest that took no count of time, or stock of chills, overhearing the tale of a man ordered away on an expedition, of strange adventures, of capture by a border tribe, of long imprisonment, of the return of the expedition short of Captain Roscoe, with a helmet marked with his name, with reports of many bodies found disfigured beyond recognition, of the unavailing search for him; a story of his ultimate wanderings and his return at last to hear that his wife had gone to England, that she had since died, of proofs handed him, no mention of the baby son. She heard, too, how he had turned back heart-broken to seek adventures once again, living alone and apart until at last he had come to England after fifteen years. How he had heard solicitors tell their dry tale of a son, how he had hurried excitedly to Mr. Herbert Chynn, then how he had motored down to Harley, and how, on the way, he had happened across that very son beside a ditch.

He told his tale in a deep, kindly voice, that made the four listeners feel strangely glad that *this* was Roscoe's father; his manner won their hearts, and within each of the four there was one great unspoken thought. Benham, Barbara, Mrs. North, and, above all, Roscoe, listened with a glad recollection that now Mr. Chynn would be stepping out of the picture, that this man would understand and help Roscoe, that the guardian uncle was relieved of his duties. They smiled at each other thoughtfully, neither voicing the common thought. But it was there.

CHAPTER XXXI

EXIT MENZIES

HENCEFORTH there becomes noticeable in this story an atmosphere faintly reminiscent of the wedding scene in the last act of a musical comedy. Characters last seen struggling impotently against the stern realities of life come to the surface again in the most satisfactory way. Events generally assume a thoroughly optimistic aspect. This is to be regretted, but it could not be helped. There is a tangle to be straightened out, and this can only be done by a statement of facts honestly recorded.

Let us then examine the report of a meeting in Laing's study on the evening following that during which Roscoe had met his father. Benham was there, a privileged visitor, but also in the *rôle* of a witness; Menzies was there; Laing was host, and there was nobody else.

Menzies stood by the table with his characteristic flabbiness in great prominence. Laing faced him from his favourite spot in front of the mantelpiece. Benham had found employment for a capacious chair in the corner, the property of Symington.

"I mean," Laing was saying, "where exactly did you find the handkerchief?"

"I've told you," said Menzies, with the air of a man whom persecution has made sorry he ever spoke, "on the ruins of the shop."

"But where?" insisted Laing. "Was it under the leg of a chair, or on top of a hat, or what?"

"Oh, I forget."

"What I mean is it wasn't out in the road about a couple of hundred yards or so away from the shop?"

"Oh, no," said Menzies, hastily; "oh, no."

"Benham," explained Laing, "is satisfied that it was."

There was a sharp pause. The Old Boy sat still with his hands clasped in front of his mouth; Menzies shifted his feet, while Laing waited. The pause became long drawn out. It stretched farther and farther like an elastic band, until at last it broke from sheer strain.

"As a matter of fact," Menzies said at last, awkwardly, "I think there's been a little misunderstanding. I wasn't actually the one who found the handkerchief. Mrs. Kent found it."

"You said," observed Laing, "that you found it."

"I was a bit excited. Mrs. Kent gave it to me. She said——" he paused a moment, then hurried on blunderingly as if his conscience was running away with him. "She said that she'd found it, and thought it might be a clue. I remember now—now that you put it to me—she didn't actually find it *on* the ruins. In fact, I believe you're right. It was out in the road."

"Some hundreds of yards away?"

Menzies shrugged his shoulders.

"Ah," said Benham.

"And so," said Laing, "you got excited and rushed back here. You thought it was sensational, and you had a grudge against Roscoe. It didn't occur to you to give the man a chance. You whirled up to me in a cloud

of dust and swore that you'd found it yourself on the ruins."

"I was excited," said Menzies. "I suppose I didn't realise that it was an important point."

"You wanted the limelight," said Laing rather mercilessly. "You thought you'd be famous as the chap who had found it.

"Would it interest you to know," he went on, presently, "exactly how that handkerchief came to be there? In the holidays, Roscoe stayed in Harley with a lady and her niece. He left one of his handkerchiefs behind by mistake when he came back to school, and it got mixed up with his girl chum's. She had it with her that day, stuck in the sleeve of her coat. In the evening she had biked over to Worsham and was on the way back when it grew dark, and she stopped to light her lamp. The wick was up too high, and the flame caught this handkerchief. She pulled it out like a shot, but it was badly scorched. Before she threw it away, she wiped round the lamp with it, and then it was that she noticed it was Roscoe's."

He stopped. Benham shifted his position slightly. Menzies remained perfectly immobile.

"Now," said Laing, "you see the harm you did. Roscoe's in the infirmary to-day with a sprained ankle, or I'd have him in here and you could apologise to him."

Still Menzies was silent.

Suddenly the study door was opened without a knock, and Symington came in, then stopped as he saw what was in the air.

"Sorry," said he; "didn't know. Meeting or something?"

"No," said Laing; "come along in. You're just the man. I wanted to ask your advice about Menzies."

It was a subtle thrust, and Menzies squirmed.

"'Ve you heard the news?" said Symington, inconsequently—"awful rag Old Mother Kent's been run in."

"Eh?" said Laing.

"The old Kent bundle," said Symington, critically examining his finger nails. "They've been watching her. It seems that she only insured her place about a year ago, for one thing, and for another they couldn't find the remains of anything very valuable that had been burnt. Then they found out that she'd sent away most of her treasures about a week ago; so they had a man down from the insurance company, and a 'tec and all manner of people, and they made the kid who used to help the old woman spit out the truth. They've got enough evidence now, they say, and they've run her in."

"What for?" said Benham.

Symington smoothed his hair.

"They say she set fire to the place herself," said he. "This kid swears it was so. She wanted the insurance money."

A bubble of amazement burst from each man's mouth. Menzies and Laing regarded each other solemnly.

* * * * * *

"If you don't want me for anything else," said Menzies at last, "I'll shift."

"Just a mo," said Laing.

"Yes?"

"What are you thinking of doing?"

"Eh—how d'you mean?"

"I mean," said Laing, "this is about your final effort, I should think. It's all very well to rush round like an excited hen because you think you can get a kid into trouble, and then merely blow out your cheeks and pretend to be surprised when you hear that you're all wrong. But I'm not so keen to let it go at that. You see there are other things. I seem to remember you fouling in the mile. I recollect finding that you'd broken out of the house about every other week during term. I've thought it a bit curious, too, that your last two fags were caught lifting bars of chocolate in Mrs. Kent's place—the only two kids in the school who were ever known to do it. You cut footer. You've——"

"As a matter of fact," said Menzies, harshly, "you may be glad to know that I shall probably be leaving."

"I should be very glad indeed to know it," said Laing.

A peculiar cackle from the table announced that Symington found this funny.

"My people sent me back this term, but they said it was probably only for a time," continued Menzies. "An uncle is finding me a job. I expect to be sent for in a few weeks. They wouldn't have me at home for another month, and as they hadn't given notice, or whatever they have to do, here, I came back."

"In that case," said Laing, thoughtfully, "we might perhaps suspend judgment. You won't spare any pains to get out as soon as possible, though, I s'pose?"

"You needn't worry," said Menzies, "I hate the place."

CHAPTER XXXII

"ALL'S WELL!"

AFTER the little scene chronicled in the last chapter a whole month elapses before we can reasonably take up our story again, because during that month Roscoe, chief of our *dramatis personæ*, was laid up with his sprained ankle.

He spent that month chiefly in thinking. At first he thought merely of the past, of that night when his misery had become unbearable, and he had wandered out of the school and trudged away into the country in search of loneliness and the sympathy that one gets from utter darkness and a cool breeze. Then followed in quick succession the recollection of his slip beside a muddy ditch, of his long, chilly struggle with a swelling ankle, of the car that had picked him up when at last he sat helpless beside the road, of the amazing discovery that he had a father living, of his return to Harley early next morning, leaning heavily on the stalwart Benham, whence he was handed over to a gratified and strangely affable Laing who piloted him safely into school.

Much more there was to remember and dwell upon. Explanations of his sprain; his father's visit to the school, and his own superbly simulated amazement. Then there were calls from Harleyans suddenly grown pally—Marriott, Cox, Symington, even Laing came in once with Weldon, and often by himself. Evidence pointed unhesitatingly to the fact that in his absence his bad name was somehow being whitewashed for him. He heard from Barbara, too, and Benham wrote him a couple of letters from the North.

Then when the past had entertained him sufficiently, the future tripped before his mind's eye and vaunted its charms. He looked forward to his recovery keenly, foreseeing cricket and much kindred enjoyment. Soon he returned to school. Laing came and told him he was to be tried for the house in the first of the shield games.

"You're practically strong now," said he, "and the doctor says you can start practice and loosen the ankle a bit, as long as you don't overdo it. The first of the shield games is due to start in about three weeks, and we're

"I mean," said the captain to Menzies, "where exactly did you find the handkerchief?"

the second house to play. I've chosen our team in good time, so that you can practise together, and as long as you show anything approaching the form that Benham says you're capable of, you're a cert."

"Thanks awfully, Laing," said Roscoe.

Thenceforward James became a regular attendant at the house nets, and gradually recovered the skill that he had learned from Benham. He found the house bowling very much easier to play than his coach's had ever been, and this fact favoured him. He caught the eye of one or two interested spectators on his second day at the nets, and Laing, hearing of this, was satisfied and grinned anew, with the wholeheartedness of the man who feels himself nearing the goal of his ambitions, and with the way growing easier and straighter as he pulls himself together for the final spurt.

Laing's ambition had been very clearly defined for three terms. Roscoe's, on the other hand, was never brought more sharply to his notice than when he found himself strolling on to the field, a member of Godwin's Eleven in opposition to Munro's on the evening upon which the match started. He realised then that all his life something had been missing, and that that something had been cricket. He longed for the feel of the ball lobbing into his hands in the country from a high, singing drive. His shoulders ached to open out at a loose ball, and slog it into the heavens. He ambled on to the field happily, treading like a runner trying the feel of the track. As he came to his place in the out field, he noticed two figures come in at the big iron gate at the corner of the grounds and approach the benches from which interested spectators were preparing to watch the match, and he knew them at once for Barbara and Mrs. North, and felt very kindly disposed towards them. It is nice to feel oneself and one's great moment remembered by those who could so easily, so justifiably, plead forgetfulness. In another minute the game had started and he was watching the batsmen keenly, ready for work.

All that evening Godwin's fielded. Ten minutes before stumps were usually drawn, Munro's last man was run out, and the innings ended for a total of 160.

A year ago it would have been thought funny if Godwin's had been faced by that total in a house match. People would have laughed gleefully. Nowadays, however, things had altered. Harley realised that the old order was changing, giving place to new. They knew Laing, and counted on him to do something solidly brilliant; they ran down a mental list of his side and realised that there were possibilities about it. As a result, quite a number of boys turned up next evening to watch the course of events. These matches were decided on a single innings, and three nights were allowed for play. If less time were necessary, all well and good; in this case it seemed probable that the match would be finished in two evenings.

When Roscoe arrived on the ground he looked round eagerly for Barbara, and found her already there with her aunt. There were generally a certain number of outside spectators at these matches, and the couple were therefore not too conspicuous. Roscoe strolled over to them happily.

"And so you're going to pull it off?" said Barbara, excitedly.

"They say," said Roscoe, "that Godwin's are going to win a match at last."

"If they do," said Barbara, "take care that you have something to do with it."

* * * * *

Roscoe did not go in first and score a century. I am well aware that theoretically this should have been done, but I am recording facts. Roscoe, then, went in sixth, and scored nine. It has been said that some scores of less than ten are more valuable than certain centuries; this was, I think, a case in point.

It was not his score that made Roscoe's part in that match conspicuous, it was his manner of getting his runs, and particularly his play in an emergency. Listen to the story.

Laing went in first with Cox, who immediately after receiving his second ball came out again, under the impression that there was a large hole in he centre of his bat.

Symington, whose style when practising late cuts with a walking-stick in country lanes was inimitable, took his place. The score commenced. Soon Godwin's had scored ten. In the old days this unusual occurrence would have been the signal for a burst of hoarse cheering. The captain of the house (if batting) might have left his wicket to shake hands clammily with his partner, murmuring suitable comments; the other would have replied with a break in the voice. Not so now—the score rose. Soon Laing had himself scored ten, and five from Symington made, together with a leg-bye, a total of sixteen. For Godwin's this was exceedingly good. Just, however, as twenty for one might have been signalled,

Symington lost his head, and, hitting out insolently at an excellent ball, was bowled, like Cox, and concluded his part in the game. Morrison joined Laing. His expression was grim, seeming to say that if history was in the making this day, his, Morrison's, skill must be well in the foreground on behalf of Godwin's. He had led the "A" team at Rugger, and felt now that he must carry on the good work in the cricket field.

Laing seized the opportunity to score a further half-dozen, and then Morrison's turn came, and he hit out like a blacksmith at each and every ball until he found himself at the non-batting end. Then, pausing to take breath, he found that he had made ten runs. At that pace, thought he, a century was not a long way off. Laing, driving with power and cutting stylishly, piled up his own runs neatly until the side's total stood at forty. Then Morrison, hitting one a little too high and not with sufficient brutality, was caught in the country, and went out, cheered, because he had made fifteen.

Menzies had left the school, obedient to the call of his uncle, or he might otherwise have gone in next. As it was, one, Todd, took his stand. The score continued to rise. Todd came out, and then, with the score at seventy, Roscoe rose up in his might, and came out into the open. As he approached he realised suddenly that he had become a sort of minor buck. He felt that he was not now just a humorous turn, as had been supposed when he was playing for Benham's team. People were looking to him now to score runs. When he had been making for the wicket in the match between Benham's Eleven and the school each blade of grass had been as a thorn in his foot; now he walked on air. Barbara was watching. Laing was at the other end, well set; the house needed his help to stop the rot at his end of the wicket; it was all very different, very new, very pleasant, and exciting into the bargain. Life was good.

Laing, waiting, was thinking, too. After Roscoe he could only look to the Godwin tail to help him, and that tail was long and thin—very thin. Even Marriott and Gardner were unreliable; good at football, and both good athletes, they were not really at home on the cricket field, and he could not expect many runs from them. So as Roscoe arrived Laing strolled across to meet him.

"I want you to just stonewall," said he. "Keep up your end, d'you see? I'm set, and I think I'm good for a few more. Let me take the batting. You just keep out the straight ones, and run as smartly as you can between wickets."

"Righto!" said Roscoe. He nodded, bracing himself for the task before him, then took his stand, planted his bat in its grave, and took guard.

So the fun began.

After three overs had been played the onlookers "got wise" to the scheme in force, and became pleasantly excited. Laing played his own part magnificently. The hundred soon went up; then 110, and 115. Munro's bowlers grew annoyed. Accordingly, on the rare occasions when they were able to attack Roscoe they put them down with all the guile of which they were capable. But Roscoe was well on top. He had been appointed to a certain job, and he meant to carry out his instructions. So, straight balls and wily balls, fast yorkers and tempting long hops, he played with stubborn care, keeping them out. And from the other end Laing smiled approvingly, and up went 120. From here on the men who were watching, and even the visitors, applauded almost every hit. Godwin's, instead of being black sheep, were firm favourites. Laing's twos and threes, and Roscoe's monotonous blocking varied with an occasional fluky single, all came in for their meed of cheering. The score still mounted. On her bench Barbara leant forward excitedly. Her sisterly interest in Roscoe was to-day almost charged with electricity. Every time he kept out those most sinister balls of the Munro bowlers she laughed to herself excitedly. At each hit of the diminutive Laing's she clapped. Then Laing passed his century, and half an hour later it was suddenly realised that the score was within five runs of Munro's total. Laing realised this, too, but he never for a moment lost his nerve. A beautiful drive that shot past long-on like a bullet sent up 159. He still had the bowling. The next ball was gentle and kindly; there was a crack, and the faint, sleepy drone of a ball sailing far away into the distance. At once great, honestly sincere cheering burst forth. Laing flushed faintly, and straightened his cap with a typically English "stop your noise" air. And Godwin's had won their first cricket match for three years.

"It's all right," he called out to Roscoe, "you can hit out now."

Next over it was Roscoe's turn to bat. Mentally he totalled up his score. He had made nine. Very well. He liked the way Laing had brought off that last hit. It was

slightly spectacular. It appealed to him; he loosened his shoulders a little, looked round the field defiantly, then made ready for the ball. It swung down invitingly. He stepped out, and lifted his bat in the style of a golfer driving off.

Next moment his centre stump was lying on its face in the grass, and he was soberly walking away from the wicket. His score was still nine—yet the air was very thick with shouting and clapping. He listened intently for what he might imagine to be Barbara's applause. Then somebody hit him on the back, and others followed suit. He felt a man seize his leg, and heave upwards. Another supported him on his shoulder, more gathering round enthusiastically cheering. Roscoe had made good.

There was no sense now in continuing the innings; Laing, signalling to the umpire to draw stumps, followed Roscoe. Another crowd of Harleyans advanced. Laing looked at them apprehensively, then turned and started to run. They gave chase, whooping, scattered a little, rounded him off and closed in. Then he was hoisted up, flushed and smiling happily Outside spectators rose, clapping politely. Other Harleyans sighting these goings-on, came running. Again, as had been done on Sports Day, somebody started the school song in honour of Laing. The crowd supporting their diminutive captain marched pompously across the ground singing as lustily as they might. Here and there men were waving hats and cheering madly. It was a jolly scene.

Ten minutes later Roscoe had escaped from his own mobbing and was talking to Barbara, telling just how it felt to be out there—almost alone—with the score gradually mounting, and people cheering every hit.

Laing, let loose in his turn, stood talking a little later to Mr. Sainsbury.

"I'm awfully glad," he was saying, "awfully glad, sir, of course. Still, it's my last term, and I'm rather afraid that it's hardly enough to make things really different when I'm gone. I should like to feel that the house was well on the mend. I'm afraid, though, that Mr. Godwin hardly takes things so seriously. He doesn't seem very interested in games. I noticed he wasn't even here to-day."

Mr. Sainsbury smiled thoughtfully. He was perhaps the most popular master at Harley. He hesitated a moment. Then:—

"Well, Laing," he said, "perhaps I oughtn't to tell you, but I think I'd better, or you may not enjoy your last weeks here so well as you deserve. Don't worry about next term. There's going to be a change."

"A change, sir!" said Laing. "How?"

"Mr. Godwin is resigning his house-mastership. The head master has offered it to me. After to-day I feel very glad that I have taken it on."

"You *have*, sir?" said Laing, wildly. "You *have?*"

The master nodded, smilingly.

And Roscoe? We will leave him in the junior common-room. He is sitting at his desk. Before him is a sheet of paper. In his mouth a pen He has just written the startling words:—

"Dear Barbara."

The fact of the matter is this: He had left Barbara an hour previously. During that hour it had been slowly dawning upon him that he was a fool and a cad—principally both.

In his hour of greatest happiness he had been patting himself cheerily on the back, as one by way of becoming a buck of no mean standing. He had congratulated himself for some time and with much vigour and enthusiasm before he realised that he owed all this not to himself, not to *his* skill, not to *his* determination at all. He had stopped abruptly in his walk across the playing fields after saying good-bye to Barbara, realising with sharp annoyance that he had left undone the one great thing which he ought to have done.

To Barbara all this was due.

He walked on slowly, angry beyond measure. All the way he grumbled at himself for his selfishness and ingratitude. Why had he not thought to thank her? What a fool! What an ass! What a blundering self-centred goat! He wandered slowly into the school, found his way to the common-room. A few boys greeted him affably. One or two said, "Well played, Maggot, old sport!" with indubitable enthusiasm.

He sat down mournfully, and took foolscap and a pen out of his desk

There was only one thing to do. He must write. He tried to think how to express himself, tried to imagine what she would like him to say. He looked again at the paper, at the almost illegibly written "Dear Barbara." He held his head on one side and regarded these opening bars critically. Then he bit his pen. At last he gripped this firmly in his hand and applied it with sorrowful care to the paper. I think, reader—yes, I think we will leave him like that.

The End

DUTCH STAMPS AND THEIR VARIETIES

THE stamps of Holland, as our English catalogues and handbooks call them, though the country would be more correctly styled "The Netherlands," have been very highly specialised during recent years, and are now listed in such a bewildering variety of papers and perforations and types that the young philatelist is rather apt to be dismayed, and too hastily to set this down as one of the difficult countries. Of course, it is nothing of the kind; it is quite an easy country if one is content to collect its issues on simple lines.

If we compare the lists of Dutch stamps given in those two extremes of cataloguing—Messrs. Gibbons' catalogue on the one hand, and that of Messrs. Whitfield King & Co., on the other—we find that the advanced handbook lists 232 items, and the beginners' catalogue only seventy-six. These figures relate to postage stamps proper. If we take the "Postage Dues" into account the discrepancy is less marked; for here there are eighty-five

Dutch stamps of 1852, 1864, and 1872, with head of King William III.

items in "Gibbons" as against fifty-one in "Whitfield King."

Unquestionably the ideal way to build up a collection of the stamps of Holland is to make, first, a complete collection of the standard varieties as listed in Messrs. Whitfield King's publication. This is neither a difficult nor a very costly matter. If the stamps be taken in used condition one finds only a dozen or so standing at higher catalogue figures than one shilling. The getting together of the complete series of seventy-five varieties (or 126, if the "Postage Dues" be included) will in itself yield an excellent education in Dutch stamps in general.

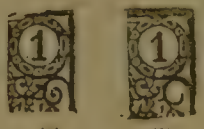
Personally I advise the ignoring of the unpaid-letter stamps—at any rate, at first—but that is a matter for individual decision. The over-printing of the De Ruyter commemorative stamps with the word "Portzegel" to create no fewer than thirteen new varieties of postage-due labels was an episode of dubious credit to a country like Holland, which had hitherto been quite a pattern to others in its postal issues, if we except the modest issue of "charity" stamps in 1906—the "tuberculosis" issue. But *facilis descensus*——! The Netherlands Government have since given us a series of large and ugly historical "stickers"; and, having fairly tasted blood, I suppose they will easily invent further excuses for this sort of thing as time goes on. Until further restrictive action is undertaken by the Postal Union, we shall get no real relief from this gross misuse of the various national postal administrations.

The numeral issue of 1876.

Having gathered together a standard collection of Holland, we can proceed to embellish it with the many minor varieties of type, perforation, etc.

In the first Dutch issue (January, 1852), bearing a bust of King William III., and having a posthorn for watermark, there are

marked shades of colour in both values, 5 cents and 10 cents; but otherwise the variations are of a very minor character. Thus, the watermark will be found to vary slightly on each of the one hundred stamps forming the complete sheet, the paper varies from thick to thin, and specimens are found with white and with brown gum.



(*a*) (*b*)

The two varieties of the 1 cent emerald green stamp of 1876—the normal stamp (*a*), and the variety showing imperfect ornament under the numeral "1" (*b*).

With the second issue (1864) perforating was adopted, but as some compensation for this—from the view-point of the philatelist — watermarking was dropped, and has never since been employed for the stamps of Holland. In this second series of line-engraved stamps there is nothing of outstanding importance to record. The paper shows some variation of substance and of colours, specimens being shown on "blued" paper; but in printing and other details the stamps are true to type.

In the third issue (1867), often called the "large King's Heads" to distinguish them from the "small heads" of 1872, we find the first Dutch varieties of real philatelic importance. These variations occur in the numerals of value at the foot of the stamp, there being a Die I. and a Die II. for each of the five denominations—5, 10, 15, 20, and 50 cents. The list of this issue is further complicated by the introduction of numerous differing gauges of peroration. The first style of perforation was that already used for the stamps of the preceding issue, namely, "12½ by 12." This was followed by "10½ by 10," "14," "13 to 13½ by 14," and "13 to 13½." With the changes rung on "perfs." and dies the stamps of the period 1867 to 1871 should satisfy the most voracious specialist, since the set of five stamps can be made to yield no fewer than forty-five varieties!

Dutch stamps of 1891 and 1898, showing Queen Wilhelmina as a young girl and as an adult.

Readers must be reminded here that the Dutch cent is not the equivalent of the cent of other countries. Five Dutch cents go to the British penny. Thus in the first three postal issues of Holland there was no stamp of a lower face value than one penny or a higher than tenpence.

This state of things was remedied, as regards low values, in 1869, when the stamps of ½, 1, 1½, 2, and 2½ cents first made their appearance. The Dutch postal administrators have always adhered to the system, so prevalent on the Continent, of issuing their low-value stamps with some very plain and non-personal design. At first the crown and arms of Holland were used for this purpose, but in 1876 a plain numeral design was adopted, and the latest series of these stamps of low denomination (1898) carries out the same idea in a label of different shape. Note the background of the "numeral" stamps of 1876, which shows a network wherein the figure of value is many times repeated. In the ½ cent of this set there is an interesting minor variety showing a broken arabesque below the small numeral "1" in the top right-hand corner. This peculiarity is understood to have occurred once in every sheet of the emerald green printing of this stamp. The illustrations given will clearly show the broken ornament of the variety.

The 1 Gulden Dutch stamp in which an interesting variety occurs.

The Dutch stamps of the 1872 issue are another complicated series, particularly as regards varieties of perforation. These are the stamps known as the "small King's Heads." They number eleven values in all, new denominations of 7½, 12½, and 22½ cents, and 1 and 2½ gulden having been created. But from these eleven the advanced specialist is able to supply himself with over fifty distinct varieties.

Of all these varieties the most singular are the stamps with the perforation "11½ by 12." There was no perforating machine at the Government stamp printing works yielding this particular gauge; and as a matter of fact the stamps were so perforated as a result of an accident to the "12½ by 12" machine. Only the first stamp in each row of ten in the sheet received this error of perforation, the other nine specimens being in quite the normal perforation. I think this error must be unique in postage stamp history.

(*a*) (*b*)

The two varieties of the 1 gulden stamp—(*a*) thin lettering; and (*b*), thicker lettering.

The young Queen Wilhelmina succeeded to the throne of the Netherlands in 1890, and in

the following year we saw her head on the national postage stamps as that of a young girl "with her hair down." Nine years later the stamps of the current type, giving a grown-up portrait of the Dutch Queen, began to appear.

The first of these sets yields plenty of work for the variety-hunter. The perforation, except for the high values, is a constant "12½," but in every stamp in the list two or more shades of colour are to be found. Also the majority of the values are to be had on two very distinct "makes" of paper. The first of these is a paper of medium thickness and fairly opaque; the other and later paper is much thinner, smoother, and more transparent.

In the stamps bearing the "grown-up" head of Queen Wilhelmina there are also shades of colour, though these are less marked. A well-known variety of the 1 gulden stamp shows a difference in the typography of the word "gulden." The comparative illustrations I have given will make this clear. In type (*a*) the lettering is thin, while in type (*b*) the characters are conspicuously thicker, and there is also a difference in the position of the numerals of value in the lower corners, these being rather nearer the bottom frame in type (*b*) than in type (*a*).

There is a heap of work yet to be done in connection with the Dutch stamps now appearing, and I commend the task to young Captainites with keen eyes and a taste for bargain-hunting.

A word before I close as to the De Ruyter commemorative issue—stamps brought out in honour of the tercentenary of the birth of one of the great naval heroes of the Low Countries—Admiral de Ruyter, who in Charles II.'s reign sailed with his ships of war into the mouths of the Thames and the Medway, causing greater consternation among the British people than ever the Germans have done, although, to his credit be it said, the great Dutch admiral made no speciality of the slaughter of women and children.

One of the De Ruyter commemorative stamps.

The De Ruyter stamps bear a portrait of the admiral, together with a very crude representation of a naval battle. It was an issue of very modest dimensions, consisting of only three stamps with a total face value of slightly less than one penny; but as I have said already, the Dutch afterwards surcharged these labels with a variety of values and the word "Portzegel," with a view to laying philatelists under further contribution.

Little Colonies to Specialise

The Falkland Islands

ONE ought not to describe the Falklands as a "little" colony in quite the same way as one would speak of the Maldives or the Gilbert and Ellice Protectorate; but nevertheless they are a group well within the compass of the young collector.

The "franks" which figure as the first items in the Falklands list in most of the catalogues may be ignored—at any rate, until a favourable opportunity occurs to pick them up cheaply. I do not impugn their genuineness, but I think that a collection of Falkland Island stamps would never be denounced as incomplete if it lacked only these "franks," which at best are merely local stamps claiming a sort of semi-official origin. There remain the issues of the Victorian, Edwardian, and Georgian periods. The Queen Victoria stamps were engraved and printed by Messrs. Bradbury, Wilkinson & Co., while the "Edwards" and "Georges" were the work of Messrs. De La Rue.

Engraved stamps being an unusual luxury in this age of hurry, the Falkland Islands issues, in common with the few other Colonial issues that are still produced by this method, have a charm that the flat-looking typographed productions from other places can never possess.

Commencing with a series of unwatermarked Queen's Heads in 1878, the Falkland Islands dodged the "C.C." watermark altogether, jumping straight into the "C.A.'s" in 1884. The penny and fourpenny values, in 1886, were given a sideways presentation of the "C.A." waterwark—a freak I am unable to account for.

The principal rarities of this colony are the 1*d.* and 4*d.*, no watermark; the "½*d.*" surcharge on the half of the penny stamp, cut diagonally; the varieties of this same surcharge; and the high values (2*s.* 6*d.* and 5*s.*) of the Victorian and Edwardian series. I speak of "rarities" here only in a relative sense, for the whole of the Falklands list contains nothing that one could class among the "unattainables." The collector, however, must fill up his Edwardians without delay or he will find these more and more difficult to obtain as time goes on.

One of the small mercies for which we should be duly thankful is that the "single C.A." and "multiple C.A." problem does not enter into the stamps of the Falkland Islands at all. All the Edwards are "multiples."

VERITY'S LITTLE MISTAKE

By CAPTAIN G. A. HOPE ✣ Illustrated by Ernest Prater

I

IN THE SPECIAL

IT is a mistake to suppose that the term only begins when one arrives at school. In some respects it begins at the London station, when the school special comes alongside. For instance, the train was very soon crowded, but, all the same, hordes of small boys passed the open door of an empty carriage, near which a big boy was standing, without attempting to get in. Some of them even ceased making a row as they passed. Mothers, aunts, and sisters could not understand why their mild suggestions to "Get in there, dear; it's quite empty!" were ignored, and why they were hustled on. The reason they could not grasp was a big boy standing by the open door.

Any big boy would have been reason enough, but there was extra good reason in this case. The big boy was one Verity, a great man beyond cavil, but nowhere so great as in his own estimation. It is to be confessed that he was only in Remove B, a sort of hanger-on form at the bottom of the Fifth. But he was in the Twenty-two, and expected to get into the Eleven next summer term; he had his Thirty cap for football, and had only just missed getting into the Fifteen last term. He had played nearly every match, but in the last, against Claybury College, another man had been chosen, who had got his colours—a much better man, too. At house, he was captain of a corridor of studies and of a dormitory, the grimmest of autocrats; and at college he consorted on terms of perfect equality with the greatest. He could not be said to consort with anyone else, except to administer stern reproof and relentless justice. He was very strong on the subject of discipline, and impressed his views on all and sundry—less great than himself—by scowl of brow, word of mouth, and stroke of hand. Even outside his own house, he was known and feared.

Naturally, then, the small fry hurried past him, while he stood looking over their heads as if they were not there, in search of someone of sufficient greatness to share his carriage. In a few minutes such a one appeared—one Barton, of Mitre House, a star of equal magnitude. Verity's stony glare relaxed at once.

"Here you are, Barton," he called. "Lots of room."

"My aunt, an empty carriage!" said Barton. "This is my lucky day. How did you manage it?"

"Quite easily," said Verity, airily. "Is anybody else about?"

One would have thought there were enough and to spare. But Verity meant, and Barton understood him to mean, anyone worthy of sharing their compartment.

"Cray, of your house, is somewhere about," said Barton. "I didn't see anyone else. Most men go by the later special. I say, have you lost many men out of your Fifteen?"

Arctic weather had put a stop to football before the end of the winter term, and house matches had been postponed to the next.

"Claremont, our best half, worse luck," said Verity. "And we've no one to take his place."

"Hard lines," said Barton. "Well, every house has lost someone, I expect. We've lost Smith. Hullo! What is this?"

This was a round, almost girlish-looking face peeping in at the window. Behind the face was a porter carrying a hand-bag and a suit-case.

"This'll do, porter," said the new comer, in a voice that matched his face. "Put the things in."

Verity scowled at the intruder, as the door was opened, but the latter took no notice, and stood watching while the porter put in his luggage. He was very short, an absolute kid, though rather broad, they noticed. Then, as he tipped the porter, Verity saw a label hanging

down from one of the bags. "Tucker, Morelea House, Castleburgh," he read. His own destination! This infantile intruder was a new boy, coming to his own house.

"I say, young man," he said, in his coldest emperor-to-a-blackbeetle manner, "you don't seem to grasp that this carriage is reserved."

Master Tucker looked at the windows. They announced that the carriage was a smoker, but no more. Then he looked at Verity, and seemed about to speak. But he checked himself, his eyes twinkled and his lips curled slightly.

"Do you understand English?" said Verity, with elaborate, cold patience. "This carriage is reserved."

"Is it? I didn't understand," bleated Master Tucker, and he moved to the window. But he did not get out. All he did was to hail a passing platform inspector.

"Inspector," he said, "isn't this carriage reserved?"

"Reserved, sir?" said the man. "The whole train is reserved for Castleburgh."

"But isn't this carriage reserved specially?"

The man looked a little perplexed and slightly huffy. He had seen off some generations of train-loads to Castleburgh, and knew their little ways.

"No, sir, it isn't," he replied, shortly. "None of 'em aren't reserved specially," and he went on.

"How very careless," said Tucker, turning back to Verity, whose whole aspect suggested stormy weather. "Well, it can't be helped, I suppose."

"Oh, no, not at all," said Verity. "I merely mention that it isn't usual for kids, especially beastly new bugs, to get in with big men. I happen to be in your house——"

"Are you? How nice!" said Tucker.

Verity nearly exploded, but, before he could speak, the door was opened again, just as the train started, and a bag was hurled in, followed by a long-limbed, large boy.

"Whew! Only just in time!" he exclaimed. "What-ho! The man of truth and the ox!"

He shook hands with Verity and Barton, and then glanced at Tucker, who had retired to a corner behind a magazine.

"Your truthfulness seems unhappy," he went on. "What is it? Looking back sadly to the dear old home? Cheer up. I'll see that no one bullies——"

"Oh, don't be an ass, Cray!" snapped Verity. He did not care to mention the cause of his annoyance to Cray. This latter was also in Morelea House, an even greater man than Verity, for he was head of the house and games captain, a prefect, and in the school Fifteen. He also had a sense of humour, of which he made full use, and Verity, who had none, did not like being chaffed. But Barton let it out.

"Shocking!" said Cray. "I don't wonder you were so upset. Let us see our latest comrade. Young man, come from behind that magazine, and let us know the worst."

Tucker obeyed, with a child-like and bland expression on his face. Cray looked hard at him, and, while he did so, Tucker actually winked.

"Surely I know your face," said Cray. "That smooth young forehead, that high-minded——"

"Oh, no, I don't think so," said Tucker, in such tones as a scared little girl might have used. "This'll be my first term at Castleburgh. You can't possibly know me." Yet, for all his frightened manner, it seemed that his left eyelid flickered again.

"Why, no more I do," said Cray, heartily. "Can't think how I made such a mistake. But I know you now, so all's well. But you do not know these gentlemen. Let me introduce his truthfulness, Mr. Verity, also an ornament of Morelea, and Mr. Barton, surnamed the Ox, who is only an in-coll. man, his misfortune rather than his fault. Your hands, gentlemen, for Mr. Tucker. One day you will be proud to remember this moment."

"I suppose you can't help being a fool, Cray," said Verity, a little later.

"Help it? I wouldn't if I could," said Cray, "I glory in it. Only the fools are really wise. Ter-ruth, the day will come when you will envy my folly."

II

AT HOUSE

Ellis, a rising big, little man, felt that the world had not treated him well, when he arrived at Morelea after the Christmas holidays. His study companion of last term had left, superannuated out of the Upper Third, and the dame had told him that he would have to share with Tucker, a new boy.

"Oh, will I?" said Ellis to himself, as he went sulkily to his study. "I'll teach the little beast!"

He did not say what he meant to teach him, but he had, perhaps, some reason for being annoyed. He had just turned fourteen, had been over two years in the house, and it was

rather sickening to have to put up with a new kid, in the circumstances. Things looked even worse for Tucker in the study than in the special.

Ellis entered No. 14 study, lit the gas, and looked round at his possessions, piled higgledy-piggledy, after the much-needed clean up of the holidays. Then he stared. There was

While Ellis was tidying his study, the door opened, and the face that had so much annoyed Verity appeared.

another easy chair in the little room—a jolly nice one, too—a small table, and what looked like a bundle of pictures. Oh, Tucker's, of course, the little beast! Yes, there was his name on the label. What did a rotten new bug mean by having things like that, his first term? It was simply beastly side, and he would teach him. But, meanwhile, till Tucker arrived for his first lesson, Ellis thought he had better get some sort of order in the study. There was hardly standing room in it at present.

He was thus engaged when the door opened, and he saw the face which had so annoyed Verity.

"Who are you? Get out!" croaked Ellis; his voice was breaking badly.

Tucker looked at him, his eyes twinkling busily. Then he came in, put his bag down, and meekly told his name.

"And, please," he added, in his babyish treble, "I was told to come to No. 14, with Ellis. This is No. 14 - at least, that's the number on the door, and are you Ellis?"

"Don't you jolly well ask my name, you swaggering new bug," snarled Ellis. "What business is it of yours? And what do you mean by coming here?"

"Please, I was sent here, and those are my things, so you must be Ellis. And I didn't want to come at all."

"Don't blub, you dame school baby. Why, I believe you're laughing!" he added, as he looked again. "By Jove! I've a jolly good mind to kick you for cheek."

He looked like doing so, but at that moment crashing footsteps sounded in the corridor, and he checked his ardour.

"You'd better look out," he said. "That's Verity, captain of corridor." Just then a bell rang, and Ellis had a glorious inspiration. "By Jove! You're in for it!" he said, warningly. 'Verity's after you, I'll bet, young Tucker. All new bugs have to sing for their supper the first night."

Ellis was partly right, without knowing it. Verity was after Tucker, and, a moment later,

the door was thrown open, and the great man himself, and two others behind him, appeared on the threshold, with an awe-inspiring scowl on his face. He allowed a short pause, to let his presence and displeasure take effect, before he spoke.

"This is our latest infliction," he said to his companions. "The one that cheeked me in the train."

"Hide him," said one of the satellites.

"No," said Verity, who prided himself on being a just man. "It must have one chance. I suppose it didn't know any better."

"No, I didn't," said Tucker; "and please, I didn't know I had to sing for my supper."

Ellis wished he dared kick Tucker, and, for a moment, Verity stared, taken clean aback. Then he looked savage.

"Don't you dare rot me, you new bug!" he began threateningly, but a sheepish grin on Ellis's face enlightened him. "Oh, that was your jape, I suppose, young Ellis, and not a bad one either. Little Tommy Tucker must certainly sing for his supper."

Tucker was led away like a lamb to the slaughter, and once again seriously annoyed Verity. There was no fun to be got out of him that way, at all events. He was not the least shy about singing, and had a good alto voice, very much deeper than his speaking voice. He gave his audience "Hitchy-Koo," and the second chorus hooked their house master out of his study, like a minnow on a bent pin. Uproarious sing-songs were not usual on the first night of term. But, when he saw the singer, he laughed and withdrew, without revealing himself. Like Cray, he had a sense of humour, and, knowing more about Tucker than his house did, he anticipated some interesting developments.

Tucker was a popular man that night, but steps were taken next day to put him in his proper place. No work was done that day, except the examining of new boys, and Tucker, having got his ordeal over in the morning, went out to explore in the afternoon, while Ellis asked a few friends to brew. They were about to begin when the new boy entered.

"Good-bye," said Davies.

"Sorry you can't stop," said Jones.

"Outside!" said Williams.

"Get out, you little beast!" croaked Ellis.

"Sorry," said Tucker; "I thought this was my study. Why, it is my study. That's my chair you're sitting in, Davies."

"Look here, don't try and be funny, just because you think you can sing," snarled Davies. "Boot him out, Ellis."

"If you don't get out——" began Ellis.

"Yes?" said Tucker.

"I'll—I'll jolly well make you," said his stable companion, tamely.

"Righto!" said Tucker, very cheerfully, backing into a corner. "Get busy."

The others stared, too much surprised at defiance from a new boy to do anything for quite a minute. Then they rose as one man, but, unfortunately, could not act as such, in the small crowded study. Davies was nearest, and, in trying to collar the rebel, he went down, without knowing how it happened.

"Oh, we'll simply slay you!" he hissed, as he got up. But he did not try to attack again, and no one could get near. "Shift these beastly—— Hullo!"

He paused, with his hand on a chair. Someone was coming upstairs, treading like a cart-horse.

"That beast Verity!" said Ellis, in despair.

There was no help for it. Warlike operations had to be suspended, at which Tucker grinned.

"You dare laugh!" cried Davies. "Just you wait! Are you going to cut?"

"Well," drawled Tucker, smiling, "now I come to think of it, kid, I'm not."

The four looked at each other in helpless fury They could not leave this new bug unslain, but they dared not risk a row with Verity on the landing. At last, Jones had an idea.

"I know," he said. "Let's take everything to our study, and brew there. Verity'll go later on, and we can come and kill him then."

"Good scheme," said Tucker, with approval. "Only leave my chair. I want it."

They withdrew, uttering savage threats, and brewed in the Jones study. Money being plentiful, the fare was good; but a good meal in no way lessened their blood-thirstiness. Unfortunately, Verity had not left the landing when they had done brewing, so Ellis went back alone, to tell Tucker a few home-truths before the final slaughter.

Tucker was in his easy-chair, eating biscuits, and reading. He looked up with an indulgent smile at Ellis's ominous frown.

"All right, young Tucker——" he began.

"Oh, come off the roof," said Tucker.

Ellis's reply was a kick at Tucker's shin. But somehow his own shin came hard against an iron-shod heel. He yelped with pain, and, after a hurried rub, tried to smack Tucker's head. The head was not there when his hand arrived, but his wrist was seized, and the next thing he knew was that he was lying on his face, with Tucker sitting on his back. He found Tucker heavier than he had expected.

"Let me up!" croaked Ellis, mad with rage. "You beastly new——" Bump! "I'll kill you——" Bump! "If you don't——" Bump, bump, bump! Till perforce, for lack of breath, he became silent.

"You slay me!" laughed Tucker. "Oh, go home to bed! You're about as much use at a scrap as a sick headache. Now let us come to an understanding. This is my study as well as yours, and you're going to behave in it like a decent human being. Do you understand?"

Apparently Ellis did not. He used what little breath he had to tell Tucker again that he was going to slay him.

"Really, now?" said Tucker. "I doubt it, somehow. I must continue the treatment."

"If you dare—— Oh, lor!"

Ellis spoke no more coherent words for some minutes. This diabolical, baby-faced, new kid handled him as if he had been a baby himself, till at last he could bear it no more.

"Pax! Oh, pax!" he squealed. "Oh, shut up, do!"

"Are you going to kill me?" cooed Tucker.

"I'm not; I promise I'm not!"

"Do you quite understand that this is my study as well as yours?"

"Yes. Oh, get off my back!"

"Wait. And you and I will brew like good old pals?"

"Yes, yes! Oh, get off! You're killing me."

"Someone has been killed after all," said Tucker, going back to his chair. "No, don't make faces," he added, as Ellis got up, muttering and scowling. "Be a decent chap. You couldn't help it. Have a bikky?"

Ellis had fed, but there was room in him for more. He took a biscuit, then another, and, as he ate, he looked in amazement at his conqueror.

"How did you do it, a kid like you?" he blurted out at last, at which Tucker laughed.

"Easy as winking," he said. "I'll show you a trick or two, if you like. By the bye, you've got to help me fire out those other asses if they come."

Half an hour later, Verity crashed down the stairs. The reverberations of his footsteps had hardly died away before Davies, Jones, and Williams hurled themselves joyously at No. 14 study. Some thirty seconds later they were outside again, all on the floor, and their previous fury was as nothing to the present, in view of their late comrade's treachery. Ellis had had some lessons, and had not done so badly in putting them into practice.

"The rotten sweep!" said Davies, at last. "Oh, we must slay them both!"

"Don't think I'll try again," said Jones, caressing a badly twisted arm. "Who is this beastly kid?"

The study door opened, and the kid's cherub-like face looked out.

"Little Tommy Tucker, who sang for his supper. Hitchy-Koo! Hitchy-Koo!" he chanted. "Is the floor comfy? I say, you'd better get up. I can hear the hoofy man's fairy footsteps."

A moment later Verity appeared, and the sight of Tucker's cheerful face filled him with offended dignity. To laugh in his presence, except at his jokes, was *lèse-majesté*. He looked Tucker up and down, which, by all precedent, should have caused the latter to wilt. Only Tucker did not wilt, which made Verity savage.

"Cheeky young brute!" he snarled. "Go and wash up my tea things. You're to be my fag."

"Please, Verity," said Tucker, in such tones as a frightened dove might have used. "It's on the board at college, I'm placed in the Lower Fifth."

This was deliberate and studied insolence, in spite of the fact that Fifth Form boys were exempt from fagging, even in their first term.

"I don't care what form you're in," said Verity, looking dangerous. "Go and wash up my things."

"Please, it says in the book——"

Verity was already clearing for action, and to Ellis's amazement Tucker seemed to be doing the same. This extraordinary new bug seemed to have no idea whatever of etiquette, and of the reverence due to great men. But, luckily, a diversion was caused by Cray's arrival. Verity at once rose to the occasion.

"Cray," he said, "look at this. It says it's in Lower Fifth."

"Strange, but true," said Cray. "It may be my fancy, but on the board just now I saw the name of Tucker as having attained that dignity. I think your name's Tucker, little boy?"

"It is," said Tucker, solemnly, "and am I to fag for you?" he added, turning a now quite vacant face to Verity.

"For me?" said Cray. "Oh, pardon! You are addressing his truthfulness. Fag, Mr. Tucker? And you in the Fifth? Ask Ter-ruth, who cannot lie. Oh, I forgot; you did ask him. Well, no matter. But I desire the honour of an audience, Mr. Tucker. Will you favour me?"

"What on earth were you and Cray cackling about?" said Ellis, when Tucker came back a little later. "You were laughing like two hyenas in there."

"You want to know too much," said Tucker. "Perhaps I'll tell you some day. But why not ask Cray?"

"Goat!" said Ellis.

III

IN THE DORMITORY

The first game of football took place three days later, when Morelea played Star. Morelea's lower game was weak, and the Star juniors were pleased to meet them in the first game. But they received a most unpleasant surprise. Morelea was weak, certainly, but they had a half-back—a new kid—who seemed possessed. At early stages of the game he passed in orthodox style to three-quarters, when the ball came out. But as these latter only caught the ball by sheer and rare luck, and, when they did so, let themselves be collared at once, he gave up passing, and ran himself. This was quite unorthodox, but it paid. He got past them like an eel, and when he did shove off, his arm seemed like a bar of iron. There was no stopping him, and by half-time Morelea had four goals and nine tries to three goals and a try. They were not good at place-kicking.

Star House did better during the second half. As they were resting, someone called from the touch-line:—

"Tucker!"

Half went down to the speaker, who was Cray, accompanied by Verity and one or two other big fellows of the house.

"This is the man for Claremont's place," he said to his companions. "Do you think you could play second hour after your terrific exertions, Tucker?"

Tucker laughed.

"That wasn't very terrific," he said, nodding towards the Star House side. "Yes, I can."

"Then come along," said Cray. "You will play half, and, if you are very good, you may perhaps receive Claremont's place in House Fifteen—think of that!"

Tucker laughed again. He did not seem to Verity to be at all properly impressed, and that worthy looked unutterable things. He could not say anything in the presence of the house captain, who would very properly have told him to mind his own business. But he made up for that later, even though Tucker had shown himself quite as useful on upper game as on lower.

Soon after prep. bell rang, he made his cart-horse-like way to No. 14 study and burst in. To his delight, both Ellis and Tucker were eating cake and drinking raspberry vinegar. Everyone who had the wherewithal ate during evening prep.; but, technically, it was forbidden. He turned away at once.

"Come to my study," he said.

"He's going to lick us," gasped Ellis.

"What for?" said Tucker.

"Eating in prep.——" began Ellis.

"Come here!" roared Verity. "Or I'll——"

Ellis started with gloom, but Tucker hesitated, and every trace of the cherubic babe vanished from him. Even in his misery, Ellis was surprised, and wondered if he could be mad enough to be going to kick. But Tucker did not kick, and Verity enjoyed himself thoroughly. Then he dismissed Ellis, and, keeping Tucker, told him at the top of his voice exactly what he thought of him, and what he himself was going to do to him.

"You may think yourself a beastly king because you've played once in upper game," he concluded. "But I'm jolly well going to make you understand that you're only a rotten little scug, to be kicked on sight. And I'll do it, too."

"That settles it," said Tucker, when he rejoined Ellis. "It's partly my own silly fault, but I can't help that. He's asked for it, the spiteful skunk, and, by Jove! he shall get it."

"Get what?" queried Ellis, in bewilderment.

"Oh, you can't do that," he croaked, aghast, when Tucker had unfolded a scheme to him.

"Can't I? Wait and see," said Tucker, savagely. 'It'll only be a little preliminary canter, just to warm him up."

"He'll know it's you, and he'll slay you."

"Unless I'm a born fool, which I'm not, except for not telling at once that—— Well, he won't know, and he certainly will not slay me."

"Oh, you're stark, staring mad!"

"I'm not." He hesitated. "Young Ellis, can you keep a secret?"

Ellis was sure he could. He did not know why, but by this time he had a heart-whole respect for Tucker, kid and new bug though he was, and he would not have dreamed of betraying him. So Tucker told him a few facts, which made him open his mouth and eyes wide.

"I say!" he exclaimed, looking at Tucker almost with veneration. "Is that true?"

"Sure as death."

"Then why not tell the chaps?"

"I thought it would be rather a lark not to. But, of course, they'll have to know soon. Cray knows now, but he won't tell, and you mustn't either."

"You bet I won't," said Ellis, hugging himself with delight. "I say, what sport! I'm jolly glad you were shoved into my study."

"You didn't know your luck. Now shut up. I must get on with my Horace, and, when I've done, I'll give you a con in your stuff."

If this little encounter exasperated Tucker, it seemed to have done Verity good, for it put him in a surprisingly good temper. He certainly had been grossly provoked by Tucker, and his wrath had been justifiable. He had quite rightly decided that Tucker had rotted him on purpose, which was intolerable in a new boy, even if he was in the Lower Fifth and a phenomenon as a half-back. But having been able, thanks to the strict letter of the law, to settle accounts with him, he felt appeased and disposed to be gracious. Also, Tucker's general demeanour next day seemed to show that Verity's efforts for good had been successful. For Verity really thought he was doing a quite meritorious act, that he was acting entirely for the other's good, when maltreating a small boy for what he considered uppishness.

All went well till bedtime, about twenty-six hours after he had treated his patient; then, when he began to put on his pyjamas, a worse storm than anyone could remember burst on his dormitory, Again, he had ample excuse, for the legs of his pyjamas were not only roughly sewn up at the bottom, but the ends were filled with sprigs of gorse. A yell came from his cubicle. Then Verity, in his shirt, and purple in the face, hopped out into the open on one leg. His other foot was full of prickles.

"Where's the early bedder?" he bellowed.

The juniors had their baths early, in second prep.

"Did you sew up my pyjamas, and put gorse in them?" roared Verity, as a trembling, terrified child came out of his cubicle.

The early bedder was too scared to reply. The very idea of anyone doing such a thing, to such a man as Verity, deprived him of speech altogether. He himself would no more have dared do so than he would have dared put cobbler's wax on the Head's august chair in hall.

"Answer me at once," pursued Verity. "I believe you did."

"No, I didn't. I swear I didn't."

"Then who did, if you didn't?"

"I don't know."

By this time, even Verity saw the absurdity of suspecting this child. But someone had to suffer for the unspeakable outrage on his dignity.

"Then you'd jolly well better find out. Did anyone come in while you were having your bath?"

"N-no. I didn't hear anyone."

Verity considered. It was in the last degree improbable that anyone in his dormitory was guilty, and, without knowing why, he suspected Tucker, who was in the dormitory opposite. That being so, he decided to postpone action till next day, and, dismissing the early bedder, proceeded to clear his night gear. The sleeves, he discovered, had been similarly treated. The sewing was rough, obviously hurried, and easily ripped out. But the prickles had to be picked out, one by one, with great care.

He got into bed at last, and the terrified dormitory heaved a sigh of relief. But their satisfaction was premature. Almost at once, the calm was broken by a fresh howl of fury, as he discovered more sprigs of gorse under his sheet. This was the last straw. Hurling himself out of bed, he stormed into the opposite dormitory.

"Young Tucker!" he roared. "Come out here! I'll teach you to put gorse in my bed."

Lights were out, and Tucker appeared to be asleep. Anyhow, Cray answered for him.

"Isn't it too late for lessons?" he said. "And what a rum thing to want to teach anyone! Still, we all have our hobbies. You seem peevish, Truly Truthful."

"Peevish!"

Verity's voice ran up into a shriek. Then he told his painful story, and Cray was unfeeling enough to laugh.

"And I'm jolly well going to make him confess," concluded Verity. "I know he did it."

"That's not law," said Cray. "No man shall be forced to convict himself—see Magna Charta. Evidence forward. Captain of upper landing. Oh, that's you. Did the accused leave his study during prep."

"I didn't hear him, but——"

"But me no buts. Did you leave yours?"

"No. Look here——"

"Did the early bedder see or hear anything?"

"Of course the little beast didn't, wallowing in the bath-room!"

"What else was he there for? Verdict, not guilty. The accused is discharged. As a matter of fact, Truly Truthful, I did it myself."

"Idiot! Fool!" commented Verity, and retired, without dignity, his temper not being

improved by an unrestrained chuckle—from Tucker, he felt certain.

He had no idea of letting the matter rest, and tackled the suspect next morning after breakfast. He got little change out of him.

"I appeal to Cray," said Tucker at once, which was strictly within his rights, but infuriated Verity. However, Tucker was not the least alarmed or impressed by threats of a house hall licking, and at last Verity stamped away to Cray, telling Tucker to come up for judgment when called for.

"I told you it was idiotic," gasped Ellis, when Verity had gone.

"Even if you——"

"Hush! Doors and walls have ears. He can prove nothing, thanks to my oiling the door hinges, and putting on stockings over gym. shoes. Cray'll only rot him, as he did last night."

Tucker knew his men. He was not even summoned, and a few minutes later Cray's door was banged, and there was a sound as of a lively young elephant going down the corridor.

"I told you so," said Tucker. "One up to me. I'll make the hoofy man go softly before I've done with him."

"But it was a rotten thing to do," said Ellis. "A regular kid's trick."

"I know, but it has made a fool of him before the whole house. He should have left me alone."

"But how could he have known——"

"That's not my look-out!" interrupted Tucker, viciously. "And now it's up to me to repeat the treatment some other way, if he doesn't quit going for me."

IV

UNDER THE STACK

By this time the house had realised that Tucker was not quite an ordinary new kid. The juniors had found out very soon that the usual treatment of uppish new bugs was much too painful in its results—to themselves—to be carried out. The seniors, after discovering that he was a vastly better half than the departed Claremont, were inclined to be friendly, and Cray, though he called him "little boy," treated him practically as an equal. But Verity, who fancied that his whole dignity and position were at stake, would not be reconciled.

A tie of house matches was played off a few days later, and Morelea won. That same evening, Cray gave Tucker his colours. Tucker was pleased, but not specially elated, till he saw Verity approaching the board. Then he broke out, and, as he had hoped, brought down the vials of Verity's wrath on his head. Next day, on opening a cupboard in his study to get out brewing materials, half a dozen bats flew out in Verity's face. In his spare time Tucker practised woodcraft, and had found the bats,

Verity started to clear the hall by smacking heads, and all save Tucker scattered at once.

a few days before, hibernating in a hollow tree. But there was, again, not a shred of evidence to point his way.

All this was certainly very bad for discipline. Verity was conscious of his authority being weakened, fellows did not seem to be properly afraid of him, and he complained bitterly to Cray. Cray told him it was all his imagination; but he spoke privately to Tucker, and nothing more happened till after the semi-final of house matches, in which Morelea won its game. Verity, having mistaken his patient's quietness for fear, had reproved him savagely before a number of kids for some technical crime, and had hauled him off for judgment. Now Tucker had been given his Forty-five – *i.e.*, third football cap of honour—after house match, an unheard of honour for a new kid, which gave him an irrefragable position in the school above the common herd. It was bad form, to say the least of it, to drop on him in public.

Tucker, as before, seemed quite unmoved; but that Saturday evening, Verity, in his study, heard a well-known voice, at the hall piano, singing the venerable "Bogey Man." It seemed odd to him that such a chestnut should cause the uproarious laughter which he heard, so he went down to investigate. The first few words he caught were enough. Tucker was singing an original lay, describing the habits and doings of a certain "hoofy man," in which gorse and bats in the belfry figured prominently.

Verity lost his temper, and started to clear the hall by smacking heads. The audience scattered at once, leaving only the singer, who faced Verity, smiling. Here Verity made the worst blunder of his war with Tucker. He might lawfully have impeached him for cheek to a captain and causing a disturbance, though it is doubtful if that would have profited him much. But he put himself out of court by making a dash at Tucker, and trying to smack his head.

Tucker up-ended him, as easily as he had put down Ellis, Jones, Davies, and such other small fry as had been unwise enough to tackle him. The fall came as a painful surprise to Verity—he was a head taller than Tucker; but it sobered him.

"You don't quite seem to realise that you can't hit house captains as you like at Castleburgh," he said. "You will come with me to Cray."

"Sure thing," said Tucker, quite unmoved. "But before we go, answer this: Will you fight me, or are you too big a coward?"

Verity gasped. Fights hardly ever occur now, and then only between kids, never between new boys and long-established persons in authority. He had never heard of the famous fight between McLeod and Jefferson, prefect and big fag, at Eton, and the thing seemed inconceivable to him.

"Fight?" he replied, with contempt. "And with you? I should think not. I only lick rats like you. And what have you got to fight about, pray?"

"You know all right," said Tucker. "Well, Cray shall decide."

Cray did decide. Verity was studiously restrained in his complaint; Cray heard it, and then said:—

"To decide, I must hear the song. Can you sing it without accompanist, little boy?"

This was quite unnecessary, Verity thought; and, still less so, need Cray have joined in the chorus. However, it proved his case, which was one comfort.

"There, did you ever hear anything like it?" he said, when the lay was done. "A beastly new bug making up a song about a captain."

"Always breaking out in a fresh place," said Cray. "My star half, and now the house laureate. But hadn't you better own up, little boy?"

"I will presently," said Tucker.

"Cray, you seem to forget you are head of the house, and responsible for its discipline," broke in Verity. "Do you approve of a captain's authority being defied?"

"Don't quite see that it was," said Cray. "The song was about a hoofy man, not you. The gorse and bats were a mere coincidence. No, Truly Truthful, I will not kill talent."

Verity became white with rage. He saw that Cray meant doing nothing about the song, so he played his last card.

"Very well," he said. "He has also had the cheek to challenge me to fight."

"Oh, so you have done it at last?" said Cray.

"Yes; I told you I should," said Tucker. "But he seems to funk it."

"Funk!" Verity could find no more words to express himself.

"Well, if you don't, as I infer," said Cray. "You'd better fight him. Tucker consulted me on the subject," he continued more soberly, "and I considered he had very good reason, in the way you have behaved. But it's your fault, too, Tucker. You would not tell."

"I'll tell after he's fought me," said Tucker. "Is he going to?" If he doesn't, I'll tell now,

and also let everyone know that he funks fighting me."

"Do I?" said Verity, in concentrated tones. "Yes; I'll fight you. It'll do you good."

"The benefit will be mutual," said Cray. "Fighting is illegal, and I, as a prefect, am expected to stop it. So I will be master of ceremonies. Who'll second you, Tucker?"

"Oh, Ellis, of course. He's a very good sort."

"He is. Well, on Monday, all parties concerned will go for a sweat round Manton, and will turn off into the copse above the mill."

Cray was a useful boxer himself. He had fought a few times as a small boy, and enjoyed looking on at others fighting almost as much. "Tophole," was how he described the encounter behind the copse next Monday, though not so much as a fight as an exhibition of science. For three rounds, not a real blow got home. Verity could not bring one off, though he tried very hard; and Tucker would not, contenting himself with playing with his adversary and occasionally giving him a light tap with his open hand. At the beginning of the fourth, Verity managed to get a clinch. He was laid on his back for his pains, but no more, and Tucker played with him for the rest of the round.

"Had enough?" he said, as Cray called time.

"Enough?" snarled Verity. "Anyone can run away like you, you little funk. But I'll get you, if I go on till school bell."

"No need to go on as long as that," said Tucker. "I think next round had better be the last—eh, Cray?"

"It's beastly cold looking on," said Cray. "I wish you would finish. If you don't, I shall have to fight young Ellis to keep warm."

Ellis grinned. He was enjoying himself immensely, and thought the cold a small price to pay for seeing Verity made a fool of in so perfect a way.

"All right," said Tucker, as he stood up. "Just a few souvenirs, eh, Verity? How's this?"

This was a right and left, one on each eye, and on again to dodge a mad swing. He was really hitting now, with the clean precision of a practised boxer; and, in about a minute, Verity, who knew nothing of boxing, had quite a collection of souvenirs, which were likely to stay with him for some time.

"That'll do," said Tucker. "Now look out for squalls, Verity. It's coming."

The unlucky wretch saw nothing coming, but his head suddenly felt as if it were being punched off his shoulders, amid a perfect Crystal Palace Benefit of stars. Then he knew no more till he found himself, lying on his back under a straw-stack, with a very sore head, pillowed on a sweater. His late adversary, Cray, Ellis, and his own second were standing round.

"There, he's all right," said Tucker. "Get up, old man, and shake hands."

All the fight had been knocked out of Verity, but he still felt venomous.

"I don't think so," he mumbled.

"Oh, rot!" said Tucker. "Don't be an ass. Besides, I've got to apologise. Really, the trouble was all my fault, for pretending to be a kid."

"For what?" exclaimed Verity.

"Well, I look like one, don't I?" said Tucker. "Almost like a flapper playing at being a boy at that, I've been told; which caused huge trouble once. If you'd played in the Claybury match last term, you'd have spotted me, as Cray did. I've been in the Claybury Fifteen two years, as half."

"And boxed for them at Aldershot, for four," put in Cray.

"Yes; I can believe that," said Verity, touching his jaw tenderly. "But why did you pretend to be a kid?"

"Well, you see, you rubbed me up the wrong way quite a lot in the train, so I thought I'd have a jape with you. I meant to own up at house, but you seemed viciously inclined, so I went on. Still, I oughtn't to have done it, and I apologise."

Verity took his hand, and, having shaken it, helped himself up by it.

"Anyway, I lammed you twice," he said. "So we're about even. I don't wonder you were sick, but it was your fault for playing the fool, and not saying who you were. Still, I see now why Cray backed you up. I thought he really was cracked at last."

"Quite a lot of method in my madness," said Cray. "I spotted him at once, but I also spotted that he didn't want to be given away."

"If the idiot had only told us," said Verity, smiling crookedly, "perhaps my jaw wouldn't be so beastly sore. But, Tucker, why on earth did you leave Claybury and come here?"

"Sacked, alas!" said Tucker. "My fatal childish beauty always gets me into rows. I never could resist playing the fool. An idiot bet me I wouldn't dress as a flapper and go to the mistress of the local girls' school, and pretend I'd been sent. Being another idiot, I did it. The old girl never spotted me; but she made inquiries about a very impertinent girl who called on her, and the said flapper was traced to me. To appease her, I was sacked!"

SOUTHAMPTON STREET, STRAND, LONDON

General Joseph Jacques Cesaire Joffre, whose portrait appears this month on our cover, was asked some little while ago how things were going in the struggle with the German hosts. Over hundreds of miles the Allied lines faced the lines of the Germans. "We nibble them," General Joffre replied, confidently, and the brief answer was characteristic of him. The man who, more than any other, bears the fate of the great war upon his shoulders is a man of few words. Flamboyant declarations of might, vainglorious assertions of speedy victory, he leaves to the other side. He prefers to get on with the job rather than to talk about it. When he does speak, it is with a quiet assurance that carries conviction. "France is ready to make any sacrifices, and it will do its duty until our triumph is assured. The final issue can be nothing but victory."

General Joffre is now sixty-three; he was only eighteen when the war of 1870 stopped his studies at the Ecole Polytechnique, and placed him in the army he was years later to command. He took part in the defence of Paris. After peace was proclaimed he joined an engineer regiment, and did so well that he became captain at the age of twenty-four, after having supervised a section of the new defences that now ring Paris round with fortresses. At forty-nine he was General Joffre. In 1911 he became Commander-in-Chief of the French Army.

Before the war broke out he was comparatively little known except by his soldiers who loved him. Now, so quiet, simple, and unassuming, he is beloved also by the watching world. His soldiers have faith in the man at whose order the spreading battle-line breaks forward at some point or other, or stays still in the trenches. Great Britain shares that faith. Methodical, unhurried, a man of power, General Joffre is content to wait—when it suits him. Some day General Joffre will give an order, and after that, perhaps, there will be little waiting. It will be "forward!" all the way—the great advance.

He "nibbles" till that day comes.

The daily round at sea.—Throughout these weary months of war our thoughts are constantly reverting to those brave ships that are sweeping the seas clear of Britain's enemies, and of the lads who are manning them. It may come as a surprise to Captainites to learn that in war time much of the same routine is carried through as is the custom in peaceable days. Jack is certainly not called upon now to do the afternoon work he is generally accustomed to, because the strain of war necessitates that he shall have as much rest as possible. Consequently the afternoon is, whenever possible, devoted to recreation; but the sailor's earliest duties of the day stand practically as they did before the hideous mantle of war was spread over the world. At the present time the winter routine is being observed, but soon this will give place to the summer; and then at four-thirty every morning Jack will be called from sleep to begin the duties of the day.

From then onward everything on board ship goes like clockwork. There is no dilly-dallying about the Navy; they work by the clock all the time, and their movements are no less regular and reliable. I have the

authority of our contemporary, the *Navy and Army Illustrated*, for the following facts and orders of the day for a ship in harbour :—

4.45 a.m.—Hands lash up and stow hammocks.

5.0 a.m.—Sound off "cooks."

5.5 a.m.—Hands to cocoa and wash.

5.35 a.m.—Hands fall in. Scrub decks. Lower and clean out dirty boats.

Immediately the work of making the ship spick and span gets well under way, and in about three-quarters of an hour comes the order, should the weather be suitable, "Hands to bathe!" Jack doesn't have very long to sport himself in the water, for his brief but pleasant dip gives way to the order, "Watch below clean mess-deck. Watch fall in at six-forty." From now until seven-thirty the finishing touches to the ship's toilet are given, brasses being cleaned and everything polishable being polished. At seven-thirty it is "Quarters to clean guns."

Lieutenant A. J. N. Williamson, of Highgate School, the first Public School master to be killed in the war. He was an old Cambridge athletic Blue, and the holder of the Public Schools' record for the half-mile at Stamford Bridge.

At eight o'clock the colours are hoisted, and now occurs one of the most impressive ceremonies it is possible to imagine: "As the ship's bell commences to sound eight bells the band strikes up 'God Save the King'; everyone on deck springs to attention and faces aft, while the signalman slowly hoists the colours. This ceremony was first introduced by Lord St. Vincent nearly 150 years ago. With the last sound of 'The King' breakfast is 'piped,' everyone rushes below, and the boatswain's mate pipes, 'Hands to clean.'

"It is just here, perhaps, that the lay mind will begin to get confused. We have already had 'Hands to wash' and 'Hands to bathe,' while all hands have so far been occupied cleaning the ship. Now we come to 'Hands to clean.' Really this has nothing to do with cleaning, as the landsman understands that word. In the Navy whenever ships are congregated together the dress of the day is given by the flagship. The landsman may fancy that that is a very simple thing. Really it is not quite so simple as one might imagine, for there are nine different 'dresses,' all of them having their distinctive number. For example, a serge jumper and trousers; trousers, with no blue jean collar edged with tape, is No. 4; with the blue jean collar it becomes No. 2, and so on. In the early morning the flagship signals the dress of the day, which is passed on to the various ships' companies by the boatswain's mates. When breakfast is piped, 'Hands to clean' is also piped, and simply means that the company will don the dress of the day during the breakfast hour. If a ship be going to coal, during which time the men are allowed to wear practically what they like, the pipe would be, 'Hands to "clean" in a coaling rig.'

"8.45 a.m.—Both watches fall in; clear up decks.

"9.10 a.m.—Division for inspection.

"Here all hands fall in at their respective divisions; they are inspected by the officer of the division, who reports all correct to the executive officer. After inspection, prayers are read, disperse, and hands fall in. Now starts the real work of the day. All the youngsters in the ship are told off for various instructions, while the older men go about necessary ship's work until—

"11.20 a.m.—Sound 'Secure' for drill parties.

"11.40 a.m.—Clean up decks, clean bright work.

"That is a task the average ship of war never misses. A quarter of an hour is passed polishing up, and at—

"12 noon.—Dinner.

"1.10 p.m.—Out pipes. Clear up decks.

"1.15 p.m.—Clean guns.

"1.25 p.m.—Both watches fall in.

"During the afternoon there are drills and so on until—

"4 p.m.—Evening quarters.

"4.5 p.m.—Physical drill.

"4.40 p.m.—Tea. Shift into night clothing.

"The dog watches—that is from 4 to 6 p.m. and 6 to 8 p.m.—are invariably given to the men. At 7 p.m. they go to supper, at 8 p.m. hammocks are stood by and hung up, and at 9 p.m. an officer goes the 'rounds' to see that everything is in proper order for the night. At 10 p.m. 'Pipe down,' when everyone has to retire."

That is the daily life of a sailor—that is how Jack prepares himself and his ship to fight the enemies of his King. And how splendidly the discipline and the training get him fit for his job Admiral von Tirpitz is soon to learn.

The Public Schools and the war.—Though I am not going to repeat what Wellington is alleged to have said a hundred years ago about the influence of Eton on the Battle of Waterloo, it cannot be denied by anyone that in the present mighty conflict men from our Public Schools are playing a great and noble part. Everybody recognises the fact that the spirit of discipline and sportsmanship inculcated in our schools is bearing rich and glorious fruit on the stern fields of duty, and everyone knows that many of the most stirring and heroic deeds chronicled in the war redound to the credit of young officers whose school-days ended but a very few months ago. What the influence of the Public School on the war is we can all judge for ourselves pretty shrewdly; from the pen of the Head Master of Eton we can learn what influence the war has had on the Public School. In an article in the *School Guardian* Canon Lyttelton tells very graphically of the great changes that have occurred in Eton since the war began, and, of course, many of his observations apply in considerable degree to other schools than the great college at Windsor. In the course of his article, Eton's Head Master writes:—

"To describe the effect of the war upon Eton is far from easy: and to do so fully would be undesirable. That is to say it is principally a matter of atmospheric change; a deep and not very obvious spiritual movement: much of which is still in the stage of aspiration, likely to be marred by being brought into full consciousness. Eton has always been a very English place, yet extraordinarily difficult for any stranger to know: and one of her qualities is a certain reticence about matters of moment, which has always been an English characteristic, and which it would be disloyal to violate, especially at the time of solemn significance through which we are passing.

"Yet there are things to be said; and if my readers do not pitch their expectations in the wrong key, what is said may help to interpret to others something of 'the signs of the times.'

"Outwardly the school life seems to be going forward much as usual; but an observant eye would note a disturbance of the age balance. The place is alive with young boys, but where are the young men, the leaders of society, the seasoned captains of games, and the shapers of public opinion? Gone. About 110 of them over seventeen years of age have vanished at the sound of their country's call, and are now either manning the trenches in Flanders or finishing their training near some unknown French rail-head, or teaching the best of our recruits in a southern depot, or gathering brawn in the Sandhurst gymnasium, whither they have betaken themselves by the help of a head-master's nomination, or, more accurately, by one applied for by the head master and granted by the War Office.

"Of those who have already served at the front, several have been given temporary commissions: others are in the ranks: others were in the Regular Army before the war began. Some turn up in khaki on Sundays and tell us strange stories of camp life, and never did we feel such solidarity with members of our old school.

"The number already training or serving is remarkable; I mean of those who were with us in the summer and even as late as a few weeks ago. I believe there are still people—wholly ignorant of what is true but not on the surface—who believe that the sons of the well-to-do are soft and effeminate. The fact is that directly war was declared they telegraphed from all parts of the country for leave to rush off and face the Germans. Cricket weeks were dropped, yachting was taboo, and the grouse were left to batten among the sunlit burns of Yorkshire. That was in the holidays. When they came back to school, brandishing for signature the blue papers of the temporary commissions, they found a large and motley force of residents being drilled by the masters, and known as 'Somerville's Light Infantry.' The Timber Halls continue to

echo to the words of command far after the twilight hour, and we are waiting instructions from headquarters about organising ourselves as a local 'Landwehr' or town guard, catching something of the civic spirit of order and zeal from our neighbour, Lord Desborough. Then, though the numbers of the school were much diminished, the total of the O.T.C. reached the noble figure of six hundred odd, some very juvenile heroes waiting till they fulfil the requirements of stature before they join.

"Practically all are mustering, and the more vivid and appalling are the accounts of suffering and loss in Flanders, the more resolutely and quietly they muster. Similarly, I remember at Haileybury, on the morning after the famous Kruger telegram was known, nothing was said, but thirty boys joined the rifle corps. *Quod potuerunt fecerunt.*

"The Etonians, having joined, are let in for plenty of hard work. Recruit drills, proficiency classes, and parades are in full swing; and on Thursday afternoons the 'noble six hundred' turn their backs on football and have a long spell of extra drill, skirmishing, and elementary manœuvring. When rain compels, the officers give military lectures under cover.

"But in more sacred matters there have been some changes; not startling nor dramatic, but thoroughly significant. Special prayers are read daily in chapel, and at eleven forty-five—the beginning of 'after twelve' nowadays—the chapel bell is tolled for two minutes. On Thursday evenings is held a special Intercession Service of a quarter of an hour's length, consisting of a psalm, a hymn, and selected prayers, mostly varying from week to week, attendance being voluntary for all. At first Upper Chapel only was used, but after a few weeks it was found the large crowd overflowed, and since then Lower Chapel has taken the Lower Boys. On Sunday, December 6th, Founder's Day was celebrated, the usual dinner in College Hall being omitted. The chapel services were remarkably impressive. Many visitors attended, several being in khaki, as it was known there was to be not only the usual commemoration of benefactors, but special mention of the Old Etonians who have fallen in the war, no fewer than 155 in number, considerably in excess of the total loss in the whole of the Boer War. The whole list was read out by the head master.

"As to that—since the names were only sent in slowly—during August we failed to realise what the casualty list would mean, but now we know. In that long list are names of the finest, the most gifted, the most lovable young fellows we have ever known. Some of them were with us only this year finishing their happy school life, rich with promise and certain of distinction; one or two below the right age left prematurely for a commission, and were sent almost immediately to the front. One feels that the country can never repair their loss, but here, as others elsewhere, we have been brought into the presence of things that really matter by hearing and seeing the noble bravery shown by the bereaved friends left behind. The real spirit of sacrifice, in the sense of offering, has displayed itself on every side, and mothers have dissembled the torn hearts with faces eloquent of quiet pride; not because their boys have shown special bravery and a beautiful unselfishness with their men—though they have—but because their parental offering has been accepted in Heaven. Of all the many influences of the war which have brought us into contact with reality this display of unshaken faith in God has been, to my mind, the most powerful.

"For one thing it has brought to us a new idea of death. I may be wrong, but I fancy that since the casualty list began its record there has been less talk of death being 'the end.' It is not possible to some of us to think of these personalities as annihilated;

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and yet in the paganism of our times of peace how common it is for people to talk of death as if they had never heard of the Resurrection! But now the mourning is uttered in another tone. There may be, and indeed must be, immeasurable loss to any country which loses such young fellows; but something of a message has come to us from a world beyond our vision, and we feel we can be at peace in the thought of the last enrichment of the ranks of the blessed."

Answers to Correspondents

GENERAL

J. B. D. (Brondesbury).—Your drawing is much better than many that reach me, but you must learn to be more correct regarding details. English men in the jungle *do not* wear white clothes, military helmets, or loose trousers. They wear khaki or kindred shades, any sort of sun-hat that is not of the useless old military pattern, and breeches and gaiters or puttees. White scares all game for miles, trousers let in leeches, mosquitoes, and nuisances of all kinds; military helmets give the minimum protection from the sun and the maximum of headache.

R. M. (Sheffield).—(1) Candidates for assistant clerkships in the navy must be between seventeen and eighteen years of age, and must obtain a nomination from the Admiralty. (2) Full details as to the subjects for examination can be obtained from the Civil Service Commissioners, Burlington Gardens, S.W. (3) The medical examination is severe. (4) Such a commission cannot be obtained without passing through a naval training establishment. (5) The matter is too personal a one for me to be able to advise you, but I should imagine that some other Civil Service appointment would be more easily within your reach.

Sunny Jim must wait awhile for more books by Hylton Cleaver. "Who Cares?" is that author's first long story, though after the war we all hope he will write many more serials for us in his breezy style. At present he is serving his King and country in the Sportsman's Battalion, the pen for a time giving place to the sword, but I have one or two splendid short stories by him ready for future numbers.

D. A. H. B. (Glasgow).—(1) It would serve no good purpose, in my opinion, to inquire into the identity of the various characters in "Tom Brown's Schooldays." If the author had wished to immortalise the originals, he could have given their real names in the story, or proclaimed them at a later date; had *they* wished to be publicly recognised, they could long since have announced their identity. We know who the two chief characters were, and, as a matter of fact, Thomas Hughes himself said that the others were more or less composite portraits of various people. (2) I cannot tell you the source of the verse you quote.

H. E. G. (Hove) sends me a photograph of a German postage stamp, over-printed "*Die Welt*" (The World), displayed in the window of an enterprising stamp dealer in his district, who describes it as the only stamp there would be left to collect if the Kaiser had his way.

"No. 2 of T. A. 3" (what the Kaiser does that mean?) complains that I do not reply to his letters in these columns. Surely "No. 2 of T. A. 3" (whoever he may be) knows that the fate of anonymous correspondents is to be neglected? It's not as though "No. 2 of T. A. 3" scorns minor matters, either, for though he *is* a year out, he scrupulously dates his letter in full—"13th January, 1914, A.D." As I should never have wondered whether it had been delayed in the post for 3,829 years, he could well have left the A.D. out and put his name and ADdress in.

J. M. M. (Victoria, Australia).—(1) The book is published at 3*s.* 6*d.* by Messrs. A. and C. Black, 4, Soho Square, London. (2) As you say, we have no data. Thanks for your good wishes.

E. G. (Westcliff).—Sorry, but your sketch is rather too amateurish for publication in THE CAPTAIN.

Acknowledgments and thanks are also due to **T. R.** (Gateshead), **Lieut. McIver** (Duala), **Ben Trovato, Glasgow Highlander, Edward Friend, M. A. J.** (Ontario), and **Minimus.**

THE OLD FAG

Belgian artillery taking up a new position under heavy shell fire.

THE CAPTAIN

A MAGAZINE FOR BOYS & GOLD

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